



THE GHOST BEHIND
LIZ RAY
Page 36

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THE MEDIA MAGAZINE

JANUARY 1977

MORE

We Remember The New York Post
JACK NEWFIELD KEN AULETTA
I.F. STONE PETE HAMILL

Chris Welles Learns Reporting By Mail

Can Carter Write? By John Simon

Does The Mob Shoot Reporters?

Kiss & Tell Journalism

BY RON ROSENBAUM

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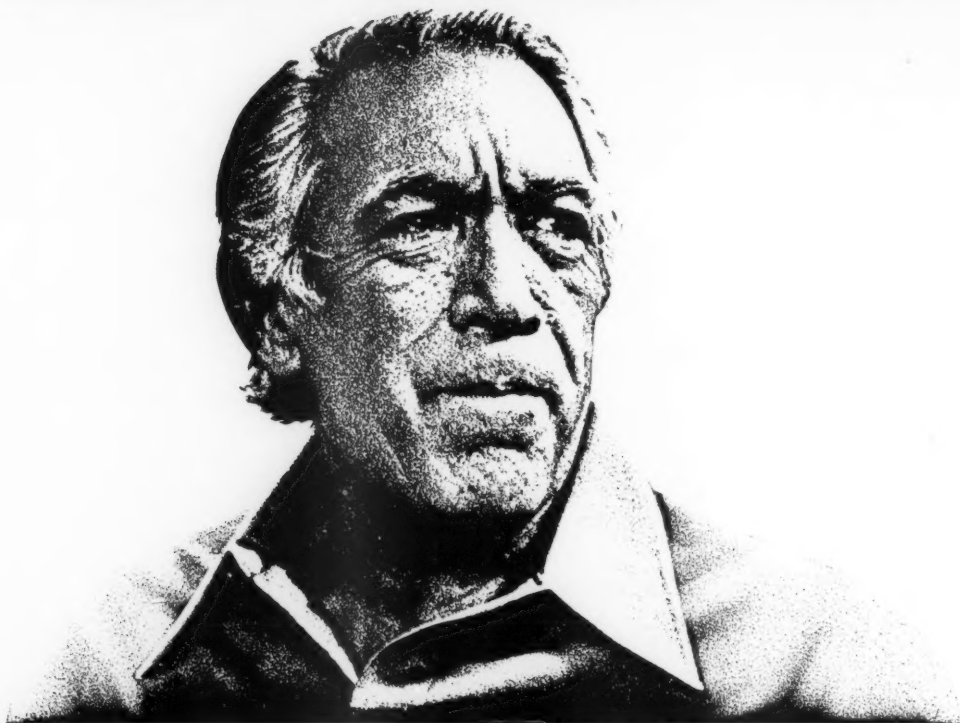


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THE MEDIA MAGAZINE More

JANUARY 1977

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By Michael Kramer

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Photo by Kenneth Smith

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LETTERS

PAY TV?

An article in your October Hellbox entitled "Pay For Stardom," by Francis Pollock, contains several errors that should be corrected.

To begin with, KWHY-TV is not a cable TV station. It is standard broadcast on Channel 2 U.H.F. We have an audience in the Los Angeles basin of approximately 300,000 (quote from *Variety*) viewers each day and we also are carrying to other communities in Southern California by 50 cable systems.

The "Executive Report" show you describe is not open to "just any takers" and the interviewers are not conducted in "any way the client desires."

KWHY was the nation's first financial TV station and is considered tops in the country. Major publicly traded corporations use the vehicle to give the shareholders a better insight to the inner workings of their companies.

As a stockholder in a firm, one has the interest and the right to hear and see a status report from the President, Chief Executive Officer. How else can it be done outside of the usual brochures and reports?

The "Executive Report" show is hosted by the very capable, George Schardt who conducts the interview in a professional businesslike manner.

—John Nelson
Sales Manager
KWHY-TV
Los Angeles, Calif.

MISSING PERSON

The James Monaco article on TV criticism ("Surprise! TV Critics Count"—October) served as an effective sketch of who's who and what their approach is to the just-developing art of TV criticism. Surprisingly missing from the article, however, was any mention of Robert Lewis Shayon and his work in developing a structure for analyzing the

medium. His approach is clearly and creatively presented in his book *Open to Criticism*. Not to mention this work is to ignore one of the best approaches to the development of a critical analysis of TV. I'm surprised Mr. Monaco could have overlooked a work so useful to the professional critic and the critical viewer.

—Stanley Staniski
Assistant Professor of Television
Hampshire College
Amherst, Mass.

GETTING WIRED

Nuts and Bolts to MORE! Or more precisely Gary Viskupic and your art director for depicting what the well-dressed investigative reporter could wear in the pursuit of hot stories. I certainly don't bear any resemblance to the male pictured in the article. And I'm not planning on buying any cufflinks or belt buckles in order to wire myself effectively. Shame on you in the name of women journalists everywhere.

—Sydney Ann Reibscheld
Los Angeles, Calif.

The article on hidden taping in the October issue ["'Bold Enough To Get Wired?'"] contains what I believe to be a serious factual error in the last paragraph.

It is asserted that the Psychological Stress Evaluator "can determine with great accuracy the truthfulness of a person's statements." This is an unsupported and on its face absurd allegation. The search for machines to detect truth is no more likely to succeed than Ponce de Leon's search for the fountain of youth.

—Jeremiah S. Gutman
Chairman ACLU
Privacy Committee
New York, N.Y.

KALB KOMPLAINT

In Philip Nobile's interview with CBS News director Bill Small (October 1976), he uses the term "authorized version" in describing the book my brother and I wrote about Henry Kissinger. He uses the term carefully: "... in a book that could be called an authorized version of Kissinger's stewardship as Secretary of State." But used carefully or not, it is a grossly unfair, inaccurate and misleading description of the book. *Kissinger* is not an authorized version; it is our version.

When I called Mr. Nobile to complain, he was honest in admitting that he had not read the book. "Parts of it," he said defensively. "Which parts?" I asked. Mr. Nobile could not tell me "which parts," suggesting he read none of it, though it is always possible that his memory failed him totally. He told me he would read it and would render his judgment: authorized or not. But is it really

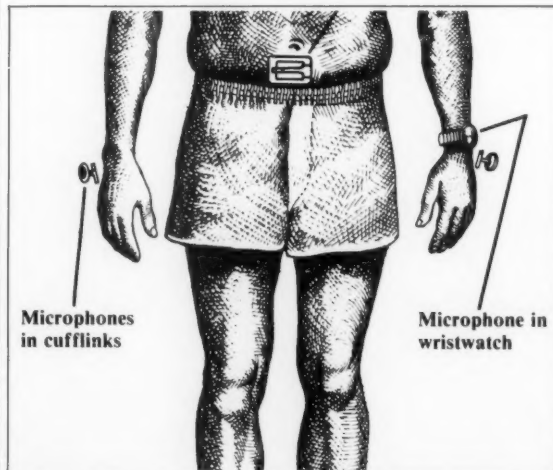
good, fair, responsible journalism first to offend the integrity of two authors and *only then* to read the book and find out if the use of the term "authorized version" is proper? I think not. I suspect Mr. Nobile has much higher standards and merely slipped into unfortunate carelessness in this case. I would like to think so, anyway.

The term might be appropriate if Kissinger had provided us with access to his papers, or to National Security Council documents, or to State Department records; if Kissinger had anything to do with the conception of the book, or any control over its execution and publication; if Kissinger had read the manuscript, in part or whole, prior to publication; if Kissinger had any say whatsoever. But he didn't. None of it. We interviewed Kissinger several times, but then again so have hundreds of journalists around the world. In this sense, he was a primary source, but so were dozens and dozens of other statesmen, prime ministers and politicians, who shared with us their impressions of Kissinger, the man and the diplomat.

A reader may disagree with our conclusions, and our approach. They are ours, and ours alone. Call us incisive; call us naive. Agree with us; disagree, if you wish. That's your right, as it is ours to define our subject matter as we like. But do not impugn our integrity; and be fair. And careful before the fact, not apologetic after the fact, as you should be.

—Marvin Kalb
Washington, D.C.

Philip Nobile replies: "Authorized" is often used loosely for "friendly." That's the sense I intended. The matter of integrity relates much more to the apparent king-size conflict of interest the Kalbs had going for them at CBS. A rough Kissinger book would have put them in a difficult position at their network. As their former boss Bill Small said in his interview with me, Dan Rather's anti-Nixon *Palace Guard* would have presented problems "if published while Rather was still covering Nixon." I wish Kalb had spoken on this far more serious point.



AN OPEN LETTER TO PRESIDENT-ELECT CARTER

Dear President-elect Carter:

Before your election, I criticized you because you failed to answer a written request from me regarding your position on some important First Amendment issues. I did not support you, but you have been voted into office, and I think that you deserve the opportunity to fulfill your campaign promises to the American people.

During your campaign, you stressed a promise to break down the bureaucracy of big government. Politicians have been promising us this reform for years, but their only accomplishment has been to add to the mess by setting up committees to study the "feasibility" of new programs and creating new agencies to carry out their pet programs.

Now that you have been elected president, you will have an opportunity to prevent America from sinking into a sea of red tape and becoming tangled in a web of government agencies. Today it is impossible for the average American to deal with the government quickly or efficiently. And it is becoming more and more common to have some federal paper shuffler trying to make his job—and himself—more important by terrorizing individuals at random. This has got to stop.

The quality of government services is inadequate, mainly because bureaucrats are too busy trying to cover themselves to be concerned with citizens' needs.

When you were governor of Georgia, you delivered on your promise to cut through the state's bureaucracy, and there's no reason you can't do it again. I realize that the problem is even more complex at the federal level, but there are ways to improve the bureaucratic system.

One way to accomplish this would be to reinstate the draft, with the stipulation that all eligible people be allowed to choose civil service jobs as an alternative to military induction.

During the war in Vietnam, some

draftees claimed that they would be more than willing to serve their country, as long as they didn't have to kill or be killed. I can understand young people not wanting to get shot; but at that time there was little choice. As a result, many young men who would willingly have served their country in a less violent way were forced to spend the rest of their lives in other countries.

This controversy resulted in the all-volunteer army, which is fast proving to be a failure. Extra inducements like pay bonuses are a costly burden on the taxpayers and serve as little incentive. Furthermore, many people fear that a wholly professional army could be dangerous because it might be tempted in peacetime to start a conflict in order to justify its existence.

With this proposal to reactivate the draft, we could develop a standing army from among those people willing to participate in active military service. **The others could choose to serve two-year hitch in local, state or federal service-oriented agencies.**

It is rare that civil service jobs are filled by people with imagination, talent, energy and a desire to help their fellow citizens. Bureaucrats are oysters who come out of their shells only long enough to take in their paychecks. The rest of their time is spent ignoring the general public and buttering up their superiors. The job doesn't get done and the public suffers.

The new draft could channel some of the best and brightest young minds into the service of their country. Psychologists and sociologists have been telling us for years why people are attracted to certain jobs. People in a particular field tend to share the same traits. Government employees usually share a lack of motivation.

By bringing new faces and creative energy onto the scene, we can eliminate the stereotype of the overpaid, undermotivated bureaucratic type. **People are always complaining about the quality of government. One way**

to improve efficiency is to force people to take an active role in government.

Since these people would not necessarily view their temporary duty as a career, there would be little inclination to carve out power blocks that serve no purpose other than to perpetuate their existence. It would also be less probable that the new bureaucrat would make self-serving concessions to supervisors. In short, there would be a lot less bureaucratic back-slapping.

Other improvements are possible, too. Citizens constantly complain about the quality of law enforcement. So, it might be a good idea to mingle some draftees in among our local police personnel. These free-thinking individuals would not only keep the average cop on his toes in such areas as civil rights, but they would also enable police departments to employ qualified individuals without putting any additional constraints on their budgets. The career police officers would be working directly with people who have a civilian's—rather than a policeman's—attitude, and they could gain a new perspective on their role as protector and public servant and no longer take the seamy side of life for granted.

Given this limited space, it would be impossible to outline all the specific details of such a plan. But I feel that it is time to plant a seed of change. America is overdue for some drastic changes, and you've promised to make some. This is the most effective way I know to turn the government over to the people. Let this type of born-again bureaucratic system be one of the promises that you keep.

Larry Flynt
Editor & Publisher

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HELLBOX

CBS's dirty trick ... Gays vs. Von Hoffman ... Cousins vs. Hersey ... Times obituary ... Cuba opens up ... NY Mag duped ... Bus. Week sued

EDITED BY CLAUDIA COHEN

MOYNIHAN SHOVES PRESS

Senator-Elect Ruffled By Query On Benign Neglect

The day after the election, New York Senator-elect Daniel Patrick Moynihan chose to meet at least one member of the press with an outburst of the brawling Irish temper that his advisers struggled to keep hidden during the campaign. Still glowing from his victory, Moynihan had dutifully returned to Harvard to teach his regular class, where he had to evict several reporters from the classroom. Ron Gollobin of WCVD-TV in Boston caught up with Moynihan as he was leaving the session. Gollobin asked two questions, which Moynihan answered, and then a third: "Will we be hearing anything more about benign neglect in the Senate?" That didn't go down so well. "I think that situation has gotten better," Moynihan said curtly before walking away.

Gollobin, undaunted reporter, pursued his subject. Suddenly, the six-foot-five Moynihan wheeled around, charged at Gollobin, grabbed his arm and pressed him up against a car. "What kind of a prick are you?"

Moynihan cried out, demanding the reporter's name.

Says Gollobin: "I've been called worse by better than him." No comment from Moynihan's office, who said they knew nothing about it. Ditto for Moynihan's private secretary at Harvard, who said of her boss, "a very nice man."



Bienvenidos: Fidel opens door.

COME SEE FIDEL

Castro Opens Arms; U.S. Media Flock To Cuba

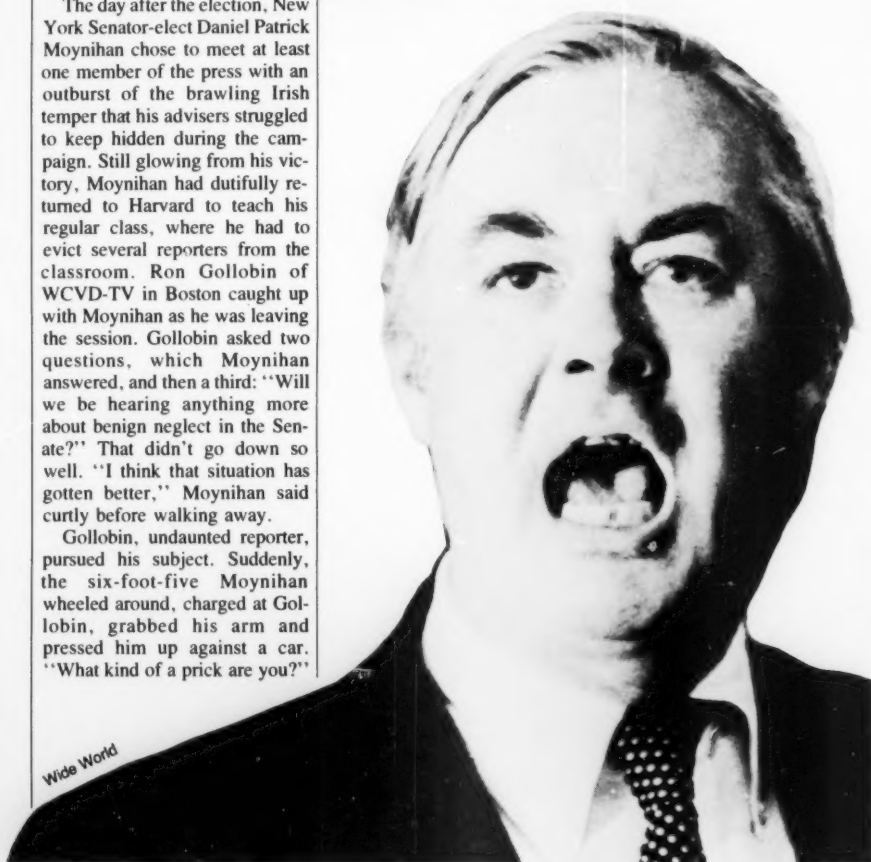
An all-star cast of American journalists turning up in Cuba over the last four to five months has had remarkably little trouble obtaining visas and, once there, extraordinary freedom in deciding what is filmed and written about. In some cases, the lead time on requests for entry has been cut from three months to eight days notice, according to one correspondent.

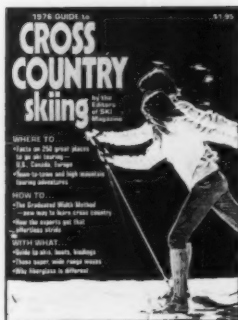
Kirby Jones, consultant to American business and media people seeking entry to Cuba, calls the sudden thaw a goodwill gesture toward the incoming administration.

ABC's Howard K. Smith and Marlene Sanders, v.p. for documentaries, took in a "Closeup" crew for a report next spring, and CBS News plans a two-part "CBS Reports" narrated by Bill Moyers.

NBC hopes to send a documentary crew early this year, with the goal of filming a Cuban prison. NBC reporter Fred Francis was already there in October, filming the first Cuban election in 17 years. Francis had a kidney stone attack and filed his report from a Cuban hospital.

—JOANNE OSTROW





Sloshed: Which magazine has the original cover?
Hint: it ain't New York.

SNOW JOB

N.Y. Magazine Cover Shot Not An Original

New York is probably the most widely imitated magazine in the world—both editorially and graphically. It has spawned a glut of “city” magazines, and almost all are making a fortune.

So how does it feel to be the imitator instead of the imitated? *New York* got a taste of it recently when it ran, as cover art in the November 15 issue, a photograph that had been used a year before by *Ski* magazine for its 1976 *Guide to Cross Country Skiing*.

The mix-up began when *New York*, close to deadline, contacted

photographer John Russell for a skiing picture. Russell said he couldn't snap a new picture because his wife was having a baby but gave *New York* permission to pick and use any picture from his collection, the financial terms to be agreed upon later. Russell failed to alert *New York* to the prior use of his photographs and *New York* unknowingly chose the Russell photo that had been used before by *Ski*.

“We’re all embarrassed but we couldn’t reach John to check with him before deadline and he had given us *carte blanche*,” says a *New York* art department staffer. How does *Ski* feel? “I wasn’t particularly thrilled when I found out,” says art director Jeff Babitz, “but actually it’s a good advertisement. After all, we used the picture first.”

clined to cover the setback in its own pages.

The photographs in question, only one of which was ever published, were taken by *Times* photographer Tyrone Dukes inside a Harlem mosque where a policeman was fatally wounded in 1972. The mosque’s occupants had prevented the police from photographing the scene of the crime, so Assistant D.A. James Harmon subpoenaed the *Times* photographs as substitutes.

Times lawyer Floyd Abrams argued unsuccessfully that the prosecution’s use of the photographs would make the press “adjunct police photographers.” In upholding the subpoena, Judge Martin Evans replied that the pictures, taken openly for publica-

tion, had been intended for the newspaper and therefore were not confidential and protected by newsman’s privilege. Evans’ decision—its implications, symbolic or otherwise, notwithstanding—was not appealed by the *Times*’ attorneys, who said they were afraid of losing the case in appellate court and setting an unfavorable legal precedent.

Curiously, none of these proceedings found their way into “the paper of record,” which had been covering the trial, and which in November had gone out of its way to herald a *Times* fight against a subpoena served on reporter Selwyn Raab, who was covering the Rubin Carter trial. The *Times*’ legal staff told night city editor John Friendly that the decision did not constitute a significant enough First Amendment threat to warrant a story. Friendly, on their advice, decided not to cover the capitulation, and both public knowledge of the incident and *Times* embarrassment were kept to a minimum.

—ROBERT SNYDER

AIR ATTACK

McDonnell Douglas Sues Times, Robert Sherrill

McDonnell Douglas Corporation has slapped a \$25 million libel suit on *The New York Times*

and author Robert Sherrill in response to Sherrill’s front page Sunday *Times* book review of two new works on air travel. Interestingly, McDonnell Douglas doesn’t take exception to the books—which recall the horrors of the McD-built DC-10—but to the review, which they charge was “sensational and inflammatory,” “pejorative” and unsupported by the contents of the books.

According to the suit, Sherrill conveyed the impression that the corporation “engaged in dishonest and improper business practices. . .” and thus the company’s products are “inferior and unsafe.” When in reality, says McDonnell Douglas, we have “an international reputation for quality, performance, reliability, efficiency, durability and safety.”

Meantime, in Washington, reporter Peter Gruenstein is awaiting a decision on a \$15 million suit filed by the Martin-Marietta Corporation for a series Gruenstein wrote for the *Washington Star*, which allegedly “besmirch[ed] and impugn[ed] the reputation” of the corporation. “They stopped me cold,” says Gruenstein. “They’re just using intimidation,” says Sherrill.

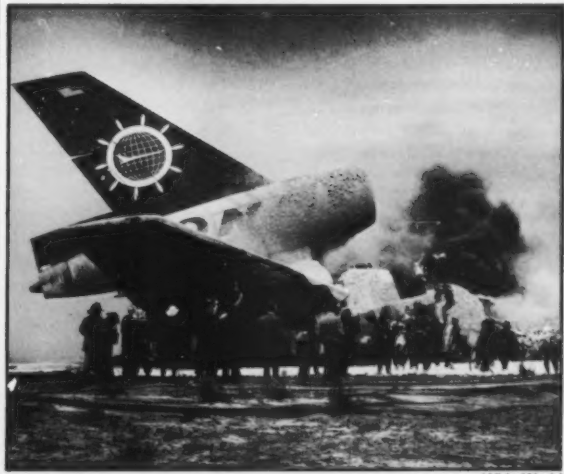
Intimidation and taxpayers’ money, because McDonnell Douglas is federally subsidized for its Army aircraft.

—JOSEPH MYSAK

TIMES WON'T TELL

No Coverage When Paper Answers Photo Subpoena

The fir. ³agree murder trial of Lewis 17X Dupree in Manhattan ended in a hung jury, but for *The New York Times* the case had much less ambiguous results. During the trial, the paper lost a First Amendment decision and was forced to surrender to the court over a dozen *Times* photographs subpoenaed as evidence. Then, downplaying the significance of the defeat, the *Times* de-



DC-10 crash: Times reviewed books on faulty aircraft.

Wide World

HELLBOX

CBS
SNEAK
TRICKTries To Make NBC The
Fall Guy Over Dean Book

While John Dean was preparing to tell all about his career as a cover-upper of big dirty tricks, a little dirty trick was being played by CBS amid the efforts by the television networks to cash in on the publication of Dean's book *Blind Ambition*.

Well over a year ago, Dean arranged to sell the option on his book and the first interview with him since he got out of jail. The interview was to be made in connection with the book's publication, and the option was picked up by NBC for \$7,500. (David Obst, Dean's literary agent, had approached NBC because he and Dean wanted NBC correspondent Carl Stern to conduct the interview.) The deal, made in late 1975, well before the book was written, allowed NBC to pull out if, after reading the book, it didn't want to go ahead. In that event, the deal would be nullified and Dean would be free to go elsewhere with his book and interview.

CBS had been anxious to get the first Dean interview for Mike Wallace on "60 Minutes" and wasn't thrilled to see him go with NBC. So CBS's director of information services, George Hoover dropped a hint to Les Brown, the broadcasting reporter for *The New York Times*, that NBC was practicing checkbook journalism with Dean. No doubt CBS was still smarting over the barrage of bad press it received from the undisclosed, but hefty sum paid to H.R. Haldeman to appear last year on "60 Minutes."

Hoover helpfully sent Brown a letter from Dean to NBC in which Dean refers to the \$7,500 paid for the option on his book. The letter

made no mention of the contractual riders that would permit NBC to pull out and Dean to go elsewhere—a significant omission not helpful to NBC's image.

Hoover says that he did this "not knowing whether the letter contained the whole agreement or not."

Brown wrote that NBC had indeed signed Dean to a \$7,500 "exclusive" contract; but having checked out the information he received from CBS and learning it didn't contain the whole story, he declined to label it checkbook journalism. "Of course the Dean letter was sent to me in the interests of that third party," says Brown, "but personally I don't think that I was deliberately misled."

—DEIRDRE WHITESIDE

FAGOLINI
BROUHAHAVon Hoffman Column
Irks Gay Task Force

Gays are railing at King Features, the syndicate that carries columnist Nicholas Von Hoffman's acerbic prose. In a recent Von Hoffman piece about the

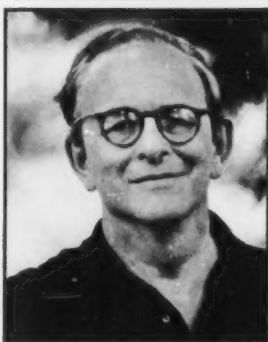
proliferation of homosexual themes on TV, the columnist didn't stick to neutral terminology: the story was laced with words like "fag," "flit," "queer" and "fagolini," the latter being, according to the National Gay Task Force, a heretofore unknown term of approbrium.

The NGTF wrote an irate letter to Alan Prialux, executive editor at King Features. The syndicate wouldn't run an article that referred to other minority groups as "kikes" and "niggers," said NGTF, so how come Von Hoffman's fruits and fagolins?

Prialux says King's "only policy is to avoid material that is libelous, obscene, pornographic and graphically unacceptable." If a columnist is trying to make a point on social policy, he advises, "don't use euphemisms unless the word is obscene." He adds that slang terms referring to minority groups are acceptable "as long as the word is used in context where the meaning is fully understood."

As for Von Hoffman, he doesn't see the gays as an oppressed minority. "Being gay is a voluntary activity," says Nick. "It's not the same ball game as being black or Hispanic. Gays have chosen to make a public controversy over their sexual orientation. The NGTF are not oppressed Bolivian copper miners, they're pushy, loud Manhattanites."

—D.W.

SON OF
SEVAREIDRod MacLeish Shows He's
CBS' Man For The Job

MacLeish: Depth-ridden

The race is on to succeed the ever-more graying Eric Sevareid, and word is CBS has narrowed the field to two men: Bill Moyers, man of many hats and Sevareid's convention confrère, and Rod MacLeish, former chief commentator for Group W and recently signed by CBS. The other night, we heard MacLeish for the first time. We were impressed. Here's a man who gets right down to things. Taking off from the Turkish earthquake, he opined:

An earthquake is one of nature's more terrifying spectacles. The ground heaves, buildings sway or crash into rubble, the sound is mind-shattering. To be in the middle of an earthquake is to feel a unique mortal helplessness. The power that's tearing the landscape to pieces cannot be opposed by any human device or action...

Modern science can give us rational explanations of how... But the question of why is rarely asked anymore. We tend to dismiss nature as a wanton force without philosophical meaning. Yet, philosophical points are made by disasters such as the one that hit Turkey. At times and places of its choosing, nature unleashes ruthless power of magnitudes that are



Von Hoffman: Cool it, thweeties

UPI

far beyond any human capacity. Whatever the source of that destructive energy, it's immortal; we aren't.

Science can tell us how the mechanics of nature's mysterious force work, but we still don't know why. We only know that we are helpless before it.

©1976 CBS Inc.

The guy's obviously a shoo-in.

STORMIN' NORMAN

Cousins-Hersey
Clash Shakes Review

Norman Cousins stared at the story in *The New York Times* and felt ill. Thirty-seven years editing the *Saturday Review*, all of them reeking with integrity, and now this. Accused of buckling under to advertiser pressure for "killing" a piece by John Hersey. "Monstrously unfair," moaned Cousins.

Hersey had been assigned by *SR* editorial director Horace Sutton to write an "Inaugural Address" as the frontpiece of the Dec. 11 issue devoted to charting the challenges facing the next President. Hersey produced a lengthy, compelling attack on the insidious domination of society by big business, naming some big names like Exxon, IBM, GM, ITT. Sutton liked the piece. Cousins didn't. Hersey didn't follow the assignment of laying out the challenges, he told Sutton in a memorandum, "and it would make us look a little silly to run as our lead article a piece saying that business gets everything it wants so soon after an election" that proved just the opposite. Cousins' solution: he would write the Inaugural Address, but the Hersey piece would run in the back of the book under the heading, "What Should Jimmy Carter Say To American Business?" He also assigned James J. Kilpatrick to write a companion piece on the subject. Then Cousins remembered an upcoming issue devoted to the relationship between big business and government and decided to reschedule both the Kil-



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Slingers: Said Hersey (right) of Cousins: "A most disgusting transaction." Said Cousins (left) of Hersey: "A blunderbuss statement."

patrick and Hersey pieces for that date.

Cousins and Sutton had argued bitterly over whether to use the Hersey piece as an introduction. Cousins laid down the law, and said he would call Hersey. He told his secretary to get Hersey's phone number, then left on Nov. 12 for Los Alamos and Arizona.

While in the Southwest, Cousins says he tried and tried to reach Hersey, to no avail—seems his secretary had come up with the author's summer phone on the Cape. In the meantime, however, Hersey had called the *Saturday Review*, where Sutton told him Cousins had dropped the piece the Inaugural Address. There is some disagreement over whether Sutton also told Hersey the piece had been rescheduled. Hersey says he got the impression it had been killed, because Cousins wanted a more "upbeat" theme, and that Sutton implied Cousins was "afraid of offending advertisers," of which the *Saturday Review* has not so many. Sutton, in a subsequent memorandum to Cousins, says he told Hersey the piece would run later, to which Hersey replied, "no thank you."

Whether Sutton never told Hersey, or whether Hersey simply chose not to believe, John Hersey was one mad literati. When *The New York Times* called, he told

them, and they printed, that it was "the most disgusting transaction I have had with a magazine in over 35 years of journalism." The article also implied the piece had been killed, then paraphrased Cousins as saying he intended it to run in a future issue. Cousins' gesture seemed like an afterthought, and he did not emerge from that account with his armor still shining.

Cousins got on the phone to his secretary and cried out, "Why the hell can't I reach John Hersey?" Thus inspired, she quickly located him in New Haven. It was now two weeks after Cousins had first read the Hersey piece. Not true I suppressed it, said Cousins. And I can prove it, he added, thinking of the correspondence with Kilpatrick and his memo to Sutton telling of plans to reschedule the piece, all of whose dates preceded the *Times* article. Want to see it? Said Hersey, "I would not." "I was aghast," recalls Cousins, who concedes his failure to call Hersey was "ludicrous" and "bungling" but who nonetheless asks, "Why didn't he call me?"

Cousins returned from the Southwest to face a shaken office. "Horace and I are now hardly speaking," he says, "and everyone's calling my secretary stupid and she wants to quit."

What's more, Sutton, a 29-year *SR* veteran, is also thinking about his future. As if that weren't enough, Hersey, who'd been paid his \$750 fee for the piece, gave it to the *New Republic*, which ran it in December while Cousins had already got it set for an upcoming issue. Just like he'd said all along! Undaunted, Cousins says he'll run the piece anyway, though at last report Hersey was planning to mail back his check in an effort to keep the piece out of *SR*.

DEATH BLOW

Time Reporter John Hess
Consigned To Obituaries

John Hess, longtime reporter for *The New York Times* who cracked the nursing home scandal two years ago, has been reassigned to the obituary page. Like his obit predecessor, Alden Whitman, Hess had a strongly independent attitude that was distasteful to the higher-ups in the newsroom, and he had a long-running feud with the city desk over getting his stories into the paper. The clincher came when the desk refused to follow through on a Hess investigation into charges that the city treasury was

HELLBOX

tapped to finance then-Mayor John Lindsay's last-ditch effort in the 1972 Wisconsin primary.

Last spring, in a series of stories, Hess was following the trail of real-estate promoter David Buntzman, who had been under investigation for his operations at the Bronx Terminal Market, which he leased from the city. Buntzman had retained New York State Democratic Chairman Patrick Cunningham as his lawyer in the matter. In 1970, Hess reported, Buntzman sold a parcel of South Bronx land on Bruckner Boulevard to the city for \$2.1 million, of which \$260,000 was held in escrow because of a clouded title. However, in April 1972, \$125,000 of the funds were mysteriously released to Buntzman, although the title had not yet been cleared. Hess subsequently revealed that prosecutors were studying a possible link between the payment and Buntzman's boast that he was "going out to Wisconsin with a bag of \$300,000." All these stories were consigned to the back pages of the newspaper.

On May 29, Hess submitted a follow-up story on the Bruckner Boulevard deal containing new information, including the fact that the deal was closed in violation of explicit instructions that only cleared titles would be accepted. The city desk rejected the story. When Hess complained bitterly, he was told, "The Times is not a crusading newspaper."

At 59, with limited means, Hess was unable to quit outright. Instead, he sought an assignment that would clear him of the city desk. For several months he was buried with rookie tasks like covering political luncheons and routine press conferences. Finally last fall, he accepted his new post as advance obit writer.

There may be a lot of gloating in New York political circles about Hess' new assignment, but Hess says, "It's not that bad a job." He will, after all, have the last word. And from now on, none of his subjects will be calling the city desk to complain.

—JOHN C. KLOTZ

CHECK IT OUT

CRIME: ABC scoops up jailbird John Ehrlichman's novel *The Company* as basis for eight-part miniseries titled "Washington." Andy Griffith to star • Gossip columnist Liz Smith sitting on hot story of scandals in panicky CBS executive suites. Figures *Daily News* exec editor Mike O'Neill, who earlier killed Smith's NBC scandal story, would never run it • Capital Cities Communications bidding for *Kansas City Star* • Taylor Branch, in Venezuela investigating Orlando Letelier's death, was awakened at night, questioned for hours in the police station, then expelled from country.

HOT: CBS rejects new Miss Muriel commercial as overly sexy and "tasteless." Spot featured Susan Anton singing to man in locker room, "Where there's Muriel smoke, there's fire." Only post-9 p.m., said CBS; no thanks, said Muriel • *Jaws* sequel titled — *More Jaws*. Author Peter Benchley makes no percentage on flick. Had negotiated 10 per cent of original

film's profits plus cash payment for sequel • *Screw's* Al Goldstein granted new obscenity trial in Wichita. Prosecutor portraying NYC as "Sodom and Gomorrah" deemed prejudicial • Red Buttons stars in NBC pilot of "The Sunshine Boys."

FIRE: *Firehouse* magazine editor Dennis Smith (*Report From Engine Co. #82*), kills lukewarm review of *To Kill A Cop* because book's author is a friend • Alex Haley follows smash *Roots* (over 250,000 copies sold) with *Search for Roots*, complete with how-to trace your family tree • ABC refused to air the film *Network* radio spots unless broadcast standards dept. viewed flick. United Artists nixed highly unusual request • N.Y. *Times*' John Crewdson checked screenplay of upcoming *The Private Files of J. Edgar Hoover* (Broderick Crawford starring) for accuracy, researched details like Hoover's favorite brand of bourbon.

MOVING: *Rolling Stone* loses Timothy Crouse to *Village Voice*. He'll cover crime beat, criminal courts • *Time* film critic Jay Cocks starts one-year leave to write screenplay • Robert Scheer, of *Playboy* Carter interview fame, to L.A. *Times*. Plans

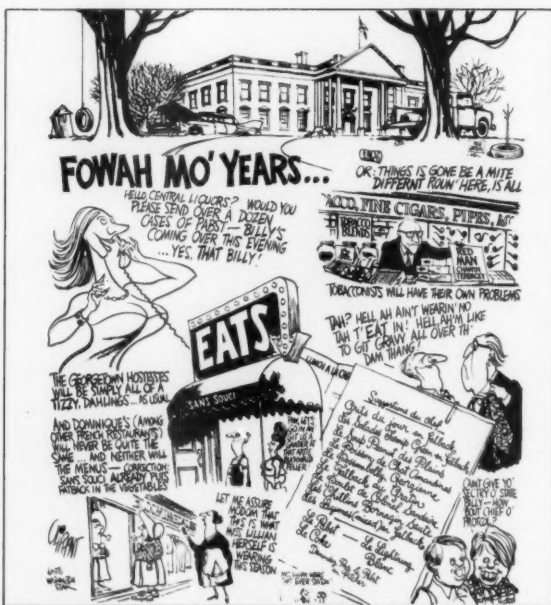
four or five investigative pieces per year. Salary said near \$30,000 • *Miami Herald* exec editor Larry Jinks becomes editor of *San Jose Mercury* and *News*. All owned by Knight Ridder. After 16 years with *Herald*, Jinks asked California assignment. *Merc/News* circulation half *Herald's* 400,000, but Jinks gets "considerably larger amount of money."

NEW BOOKS: PR man Henry Dorman to start *Chief Executive*. International circulation limited to kings, prime ministers, cabinet officials, shahs, etc. Typical article: Saudi king's oil forecast. Few deadbeat subscribers expected. Hopeful that first cover story will be authored by President Carter • Judy Daniels, late of *New York* and *Village Voice*, seeking \$2 million for monthly mag aimed at upscale, professional, executive women. Trial run insert to run in *New York* à la *Ms.* start-up issue.

FOR HIRE: MTM Enterprises apparently drops plans for "Ted and Georgette" spinoff from retiring "Mary Tyler Moore" show. Ted Knight, who portrays egocentric, bumbling anchorman Ted Baxter plans own CBS sitcom based on character. • N.Y., L.A. freelancers form Writers Bloc coop to syndicate stories. Member newspapers select from list of topics. Writers include Judy Klemesrud, Chris Chase, Aljean Harmetz.

CANNED: UPI assistant managing editor Don Myers axed after protesting downhond on expenses. "We're going to cover the goddamn news despite you guys," Myers reportedly said. Shouting match with managing editor Paul Eberhard disrupted newsroom • *Wash. Star* forced to defend cartoonist Oliphant in editorial. Massive reader protests over full-page Carter drawings seen as condescending to Southerners. Says O: "My only regret is that I didn't put chickens on top of the shithouse."

TIPS: Part Two of *Playboy's* Howard Hughes exposé, slated for November, never ran. Authors deny legal hassles, say flood of 1,000 tipsters has them following new leads for 1977 publication • In publication party turnabout, Norman Darden hosted fine bash at N.Y.'s Fonda



Well, shut my mouth: Oliphant's vision of a Carterized Washington roused the electorate.

la Paloma to announce he'll begin work on book. Darden expects story about Thomas Jefferson's slave mistress Sally Hemings to click with current slave-book craze • **Francie Barnard** (Mrs. Bob Woodward) suing *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* for sex discrimination. Charges paper refused to name her D.C. bureau chief in '75, fearing she'd get pregnant or move to Hollywood • *Chicago Sun Times* editor Jim Hoge nixed chance to head up NBC documentary unit in favor of combined *S-T-Daily News* editorship, plus salary hike. Plans dramatic overhaul of *News'* content, format.

DONG: Paramount anticipating whopping \$10 million-worth of *King Kong* promotional tie-ins. That's five times what company itself will spend publicizing the film • Media-chic hits *Boy Scouts*. Journalism merit badge requirements expand to provide radio-TV concentration. Tougher criteria also require analysis of two stories or broadcasts of same



Hot spot: Miss Muriel commercial that burned up the CBS censors.

event • Rep. John Murphy (D-N.Y.) claims ABC broadcast of Evel Knievel jumps inspires child imitators. Says he'll consider network's "irresponsibility" when flagship N.Y. station

WABC-TV's license needs renewal

CASH IN: Carter autobio, *Why Not The Best?*, gets new, more "presidential" cover photo from Bantam. Hardcover publisher Broadman Press preparing Inaugural edition • *Harper's* runs put-on Ethical Aptitude Test to measure moral values. *Des Moines Tribune* misses joke, deplores results in editorial called "Low regard for life." Cowles, owner of both sheets, isn't laughing either • Last-minute decision by RKO General Stations not to air "The Two Kennedys," two-hour Italian docu of Kennedy assassination. Stations lacked insurance, feared lawsuits. Pic suggests links among mob, Giancana, Sinatra, Cubans. • John Shaheen, publisher of the forever forthcoming *New York Press*, is suing McGraw-Hill and several *Business Week* editors for a total of \$96 million. The suit claims that *Business Week* published several stories about the *Press* containing "incomplete, untrue,

distorted and or-slanted statements of fact concerning the credit prospects and financial responsibility of *New York Press* and Shaheen National Resources and John M. Shaheen...." • Herewith a few verses from the bowels of the Time-Life Building, author unknown, to the tune of "Ol' Man River":

Der's an ol' man, he's called Henry Grunwald

Dat's the ol' man dat I'd like to be

What does he care if we kids got troubles

Part-time dotters aren't the thing to be...

But ol' man Grunwald He jes keeps rollin' along.

READ IT: Catch up with Renata Adler's provocative article in December *Atlantic* about real reasons for Nixon's resignation. Feared discovery that South Vietnamese were bribing him to keep war going. • Best read: Tommy Thompson's *Blood and Money*.

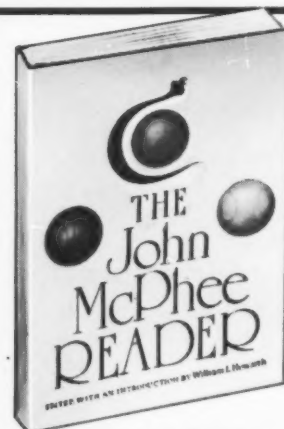
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OLD-FASHIONED NEWSPAPER WAR IN NEW YORK?

Murdoch's Post Takeover Forces News Into Two-Front Battle For Profit Margins

Competition already rages for reporting talent — and "Peanuts."

BY MICHAEL KRAMER

New York hasn't had a first-rate newspaper rivalry since the Great Strike of 1961, when the *Mirror* and *Journal American* folded outright and the *Herald Tribune* was mortally wounded. The fifties were heady years—circulation and advertising wars, competitive bidding for reporting talent. And now, thanks to Australian newspaper magnate Rupert Murdoch, the good old days seem to be on their way back.

In fact, Murdoch is still some weeks from taking full control of the afternoon *New York Post*, but a full-scale war with the *Daily News*, the city's other tabloid and a morning paper, is already under way.

It is known that on the very day Murdoch's purchase of the *Post* was announced, *News* editor Mike O'Neill had a memo on the desk of *News* publisher Tex James advocating the inauguration of an afternoon edition of the *News* (making it, like its sister publication, the *Chicago Tribune*, a "24-hour paper") which would feast on the dwindling circulation of the *Post*. But before James had a chance to pass it on to the *News* owners, the *Chicago Tribune Company*, the *News* suddenly found itself in a far more defensive position, fighting a two-front war against *The New York Times'* aggressive special-section marketing in the morning and the Murdoch-revitalized *Post* in the afternoon.

Right now, the battle is over talent. The *Daily News*, which stands to lose the most from a successful, prosperous *Post*, has been particularly aggressive in recent days. *News* editor O'Neill has lured Jimmy Breslin back to the dailies—three columns a week for around \$50,000 a year. And Pete Hamill, an old *Post* hand, just signed with the *News*, too. He'll perform unspecified writing and editing chores—also for about \$50,000. Paul Zimmerman and Vic Ziegel, two *Post* sportswriting staples, are just about locked up for the *News*, and most shocking of all, O'Neill is about to take "Peanuts" away from the *Post*. "Peanuts," for chrissake. Hell, I know people who buy the *Post* for "Peanuts" and for nothing else.

But don't get the impression that Rupert Murdoch has been idle. Murdoch himself is planning to devote at least five years to personally overseeing the *Post* on a daily basis, which should really shake up the holdovers. Murdoch got his training working for London's *Express* when it was run by Lord Beaverbrook, and he hasn't forgotten a thing. By all accounts, Murdoch is exceedingly dictatorial, and more than one casual visitor to his office or home has witnessed a trans-oceanic screaming session as Murdoch chewed out an English or Australian underling who hadn't cropped a picture just so. Layout means a great deal to Murdoch, which means the *Post* is in for a good deal of stunt-ing on page one and probably a good deal of color, too. Beyond the

certainly that the "look" of the *Post* will change, some more has become known about Murdoch's plans for his latest acquisition.

For one thing, it's unlikely that the blood, guts and girls formula he's perfected the world over will be repeated in New York. The advertising community just won't support that kind of journalism. The *Journal American* and *Mirror* could never get the advertising their circulation required because of their sensationalism, partly since the lucrative supermarket ads stayed away: the blue-collar men who bought these papers wouldn't take them home to the wives who did the shopping. So Murdoch's mix for the Big Apple is going to be a good deal more sophisticated.

The first change noticeable to readers will be a new gossip-filled page six, tentatively called Postmark or Postscript or Postmortem, depending on who's asked from day to day. James Brady, vice chairman of Murdoch's World News Corporation (see the Murdoch empire's organizational chart on page 19), and a former head of *Women's Wear Daily* and *Harper's Bazaar*, will oversee page six, using half a dozen or so stringers at \$200 a week. And the gossip won't just be about celebrities. There'll be boardroom tidbits and job-changing items and probably a good deal about what politicians do after-hours. If you want a model for the kind of group journalism that will be applied to gossip at the *Post*, look at *New York* magazine's *Intelligencer* or *Women's Wear's Eye*. (Fans of Tony Schwartz, Earl Wilson and Eugenia Sheppard need not fear. They all will be retained for the foreseeable future.)

Fashion coverage will be beefed up. Brady is casting about for some of the young talent currently in residence at *WWD*. Also slated for increased coverage is business and finance. Murdoch's operatives are convinced that an afternoon paper carrying closing stock prices must have superb financial reporting and a covetous eye is being cast in the direction of *Barron's* Alan Abelson.

The same treatment is slated for crime (Murdoch would love to have *Village Voice* muckraker Jack Newfield aboard; "Not me," says Jack) and for TV. Murdoch believes that an afternoon paper has an obligation to prepare its readers for the television they will watch that evening, and expanded coverage of both programming and the business of the industry is scheduled. As for politics, Murdoch hopes to snare Tom Buckley from the *Times*, and he's anxious for a top-notch city editor. Even sports, universally considered the *Post's* strongest department, is going to be expanded. Here the addition of horseracing expert Ray Kerrison is significant. Murdoch believes that Americans have an insatiable appetite for gambling, which he plans to feed. The *Post* under Murdoch will agitate for the legalization of gambling on professional sports, and, as Atlantic City starts pulling in big revenues from its newly legalized casino operations, the *Post* will

Michael Kramer is editor and publisher of MORE.

Foot-fondling weirdo strikes

**WOMAN, 90, TELLS OF
BEATING, RAPE**
See Story On Page 10

The incredible love affair of Liz
**Man's body
has no hands**

**Police
guns
kill 2**

Fights in bars kill 1, wound 5

Rape suspect hangs

**Biting sex
freak nips
woman**

**New breed
hookers pl
tra**

**Man killed
over stereo**

**A town's
topless
mayor
gets cold
shoulder**

**Thug shoots
in head**

be pressing the New York legislature to follow suit and pass the casino bills that have been stalled in Albany for years.

More important than the changes in personnel, and the overall euphoria with which New York newspaper people are greeting their new status as hot properties in a reporters' draft, is the havoc Murdoch is wreaking on the rest of city's press establishment, particularly the *Daily News*. It is known that the Chicago parent company of the *News* has been planning a public offering for some time. New editions in New York would drain capital, depress the balance sheet and, presumably, adversely affect the price the company could ask for its shares. So Chicago has been skeptical of O'Neill's proposal for some time. Now, with the competition picking up again, approval seems even less likely. Worse still, the *News* is now fighting a two-front war. The *Times*' Weekend and Living sections have already cut into the *News*' morning market, and Murdoch is now threatening to recapture the blue-collar base he feels the *News* has been losing as the paper's editorial quality has improved in the past few years.

Murdoch refuses to respect a difference between morning and afternoon papers in New York. He firmly believes he can change peoples' reading habits and snare circulation from the *News*. If he can't there's really nothing stopping him from coming out at the same time as the *News*. "Where is it written," says a Murdoch aide, "that the *Times* and the *News* alone own the morning?"

With Murdoch threatening to push from the downscale side and the *Times* still holding its upscale audience, the *News* could be in trouble trying to hold a middle position. It already operates on a paper-thin profit margin. Any encroachment is dangerous. Of course, if Murdoch's *Post* becomes too lurid after all, someone is going to try to put out a "quality" paper in the afternoon. "I think we may again see five or six daily papers in New York," says Pete Hamill. And few are willing to rule out that possibility.

Add to this the fact that *New York* magazine is being pinched by the *Times*' special sections, and that one could reasonably argue that muck-raking *Post* would cut into the *Village Voice*'s popularity even as the *SoHo Weekly News* tries to capture those who miss the old *Voice*—and what you have is a journalistic powder keg. Let's all sit back and enjoy the fireworks. ■



GOODBYE DOLLY

Remembrances Of Posts Past

And a farewell from comrades-in-arms.

BY PETE HAMILL

Ask for a description of Dorothy Schiff and the adjectives begin to flow: imperious, kind, silly, patronizing, cruel, vulgar, elegant, bitchy, courageous, strong, ignorant, aloof, timid, emasculating, generous, stingy, sad. At one point or another, in her almost three decades as publisher of the *Post*, every one of those words could have described her.

Once, when I was broke and in hock, she refused me a \$50 raise and then had the *Post* loan me \$5,000. When I was a kid re-writer, she went out of her way to show up at my wedding; but after I had been writing my column for almost two years she totally failed to recognize me when I showed up at her house one night for a party with Robert Kennedy. She killed one column I wrote in praise of I.F. Stone, on the grounds that Izzy was an unconstructed Stalinist, yet defended column after column against the rage of Lyndon Johnson and lesser politicians. As publisher of a terribly understaffed newspaper, she once assigned a reporter (Tony Mancini) to spend his time poring over Italian gossip magazines for items about Jacqueline Onassis; yet she unleashed an army of reporters to prepare a 23-part series that broke the power of Walter Winchell. She worried about blacks and Puerto Ricans and other minorities, but once, when I brought Brooklyn political boss Meade Esposito to lunch, she insulted him by serving him a meatball sandwich. Those years were sometimes horrible, often hilarious. But you always knew that the *Post* was run by a human being, with all the attendant flaws and idiosyncracies; it was not part of a conglomerate, run by remote con-

trol. It was a candy store and it belonged to Dorothy Schiff.

Dolly and I quarreled several times, usually over money, but when the anger was over, and I had gone off somewhere and she had taken time to think it over, I was welcomed back again. And her newspaper changed my life. As publisher, she was jealous of her bright young men, her editors, her prerogatives. And near the end of her reign, it looked as if the *Post* would die with her; it would simply fade out and die. If that had happened, there would have been nobody to blame but Dorothy Schiff.

The paper is sold now, and if Rupert Murdoch does what must be done, it will not go so gently into that good night. But for all her weaknesses, for all the damage she did to the *Post* in the last years of her rule, for all the mistakes she made after the *Post* became a monopoly afternoon paper in a great newspaper town, I can't bring myself to say anything really bad about her.

Dolly was a survivor. She faced down the giant chains of Hearst and Scripps-Howard and was the only one left in the arena at the end. It was her *New York Post* that printed the story of the secret Nixon fund in 1952. It was her *New York Post* that defended ex-Communists on the staff while *The New York Times* was firing theirs. Her *New York Post* was one of the few lonely voices in this country to sound off against the goons from the McCarthy committee and HUAC. Her *New York Post* hired and developed Murray Kempton and Jimmy Cannon, and gave Jimmy Breslin a job after the *World Journal Tribune* folded. She hired me and let me say what I wanted to say, almost all of the time. And when Jimmy Cannon was old and sick,

having suffered a stroke, reduced to writing one column a week for King Features, aching because he had no outlet in the city he loved more than all the others, Dorothy Schiff listened to Paul Sann and put Cannon back in the paper. He wasn't there long, but he died while working on a *New York* paper. Dorothy Schiff's *New York Post*.

So her departure doesn't fill me with any particular elation. She left when she had to leave. And she proved in a decisive way that she did not simply think of that newspaper as an expensive toy. I'm going to miss her.

BY JACK NEWFIELD

Pete Hamill has frequently said that all the alumni of the *New York Post* together could create the best daily newspaper in America. Pete's remark captures the essential ambiguity of Dorothy Schiff.

Dolly did have the sound judgment to employ, at one time or another, I.F. Stone, Kempton, Breslin, Jimmy Cannon, Jules Feiffer, Hamill, James Wechsler, Mike Harrington, Nora Ephron, Bill Haddad, Sid Zion, Tim Lee, Ken Gross, Al Aronowitz, Gene Grove, Larry Merchant, Ken Auletta, Lewis Grossberger and dozens more—including myself, for a brief, failed tryout in 1964.

But the weakness of Dolly, and of the *Post*, is that except for Wechsler, all the above-named writers left the *Post*. This is her historic failure as a publisher: she lost the best.

So many talented people left the *Post* because the *Post* was, fundamentally, sick at its psychological core. Dolly's court was like the court of Nixon. Malnourished of reality, sycophantic, self-hating editors ran the *Post*. Their largest gift was for the techniques of office politics.

These editors drove away the best young writers because they believed they had to kiss Dolly's ass in order to keep their jobs. They had to anticipate, and sometimes exaggerate, her trivial, eccentric whims. They tried to run the *Post* on the cheap, like the paper was a candy store on Jerome Avenue.

Today there are many fine, young reporters on the *Post*. But every *Post* reporter, under 40,

whom I know personally, is unhappy and frustrated, feeling he is not developing the potential of his talent. "Stars cost money," Dolly often said.

Still, Josh Friedman by himself covers Albany better than the whole *New York Times* bureau. Steve Lawrence is a wonderful environmental and consumer reporter. But earlier this year, Dolly killed an investigative series by Lawrence, because a supermarket chain threatened to pull back some advertising. In response, almost all the *Post* reporters withdrew their bylines for 10 days in protest.

There are more horror stories. Every reporter who ever worked for the *Post* can tell at least 10.

This may seem an appropriate moment for generous valedictories to Dolly Schiff. I'm sure she deserves some of them. When I started reading Kempton and Cannon at age 12, that was what made me want to become a journalist. I will always feel gratitude for that. She also deserves respect for letting Bill Haddad and Joe Kahn expose Robert Moses in the late 1950s and for letting Wechsler write against McCarthyism.

But Dolly, and the *Post*, also broke a lot of hearts, hurt a lot of people, and ruined a lot of dreams. On Dolly's tombstone there should be this epitaph: "Here lies the woman who replaced Murray Kempton, Jimmy Breslin and Pete Hamill—with Tony Schwartz."

BY I.F. STONE

Ever since its founding by Alexander Hamilton the *New York Post* has been one of the best newspapers in the United States. Unjustly forgotten, but worth recalling as the paper again changes hands, is the record made by the *Post* in the thirties under the late J. David Stern when he bought the paper. It had become a staid Republican tabloid, part of the Curtis Martin chain. Stern converted it back to a full-size paper, swung it from stuffy right to urgent-liberal left and made it one of the few papers in the entire country—you didn't need two hands on which to count them—which supported Roosevelt and the New Deal. He took it over in December



Dolly Schiff: *She inspired awe, terror—and mediocrity.*

Janie Eisenberg

1933, when FDR had just become president; Fiorello LaGuardia, a champion in congress of trade unionism and social justice, but no Lucifer at City Hall, was about to become mayor of New York.

I had worked for Stern in "the sticks," starting at 15 while a junior in a country high school as a correspondent for his Camden, New Jersey, *Courier*, and later as a reporter-writer for his *Philadelphia Record*. He took me with him as editorial writer on the *Post*. I was 26 and it was so heady to hit the big city that I would walk out at night under the old Ninth Avenue El, vomiting with excitement like a pregnant woman.

Stern was a joy to work for—a publisher who was an all-round newspaperman: a first-rate reporter, editorial writer, ad sales-

man and (in one dramatic emergency) a better pressman than anyone in the press room. Samuel Grafton, later so brilliant as a columnist, soon joined him from Philadelphia on the editorial page. It was life on a roller-coaster, exhilarating, frustrating and inspiring. We learned how soldiers feel who fight under an unpredictable genius of a general.

Stern had built his papers on liberal issues and was not afraid to back prevailing opinion. In Camden, with a large pro-fascist Italian population in the twenties, he was anti-fascist long before Hitler and the one voice in the Philadelphia area for Sacco-Vanzetti, an issue most papers found too hot to handle. In New York he helped launch the anti-Nazi boycott soon after Hitler took power, though

such action was frowned on by many New York respectables, and a major Jewish-owned department store which sold Nazi goods punished Stern by denying the *Post* its advertising.

The campaigns waged by the *Post* under Stern were of the kind and variety unmatched in its previous or later history. When self-help organizations of the unemployed were harassed by the New York Police Red squad, a miniature CIA-FBI rolled into one, the *Post* [Stone's scoop] exposed the fact that the handbook it was using in its blacklist of subversives listed Mayor LaGuardia himself as part of what it called the Red network. The laughter was therapeutic.

Another later and less successful campaign was against pur-

chase of the New York subway system by the city when Wall Street—unable to break the five-cent fare in the courts—suddenly turned "socialist" and called for public ownership to unload the ailing subways on the city after they had been squeezed dry. The *Post* warned that this would be the end of the five-cent fare, but too few listened.

There was hardly a single worthy cause of the time that did not find support on the *Post*'s editorial page and, to a lesser degree, in the news columns.

I hope someday another public-spirited publisher, looking back on Bryant, Villard and Stern, may find inspiration for another such chapter in liberal journalism. Why not an Australian named Murdoch?

(continued on following page)

BY KEN AULETTA

People who have worked for Dolly Schiff usually resent her. I don't. Were she nicer to me I might still be working at the *New York Post*.

Mrs. Schiff, as any *Post* employee would tell you, was not a liberal when it came to spending her own money. The catered lunches in her gymnasium-size office overlooking the East River were indeed special. Each victim was allowed two slices of rye bread and a choice: two thin, cold pieces of corned beef or a smattering of tuna salad. Lunch was inevitably preceded by a pre-mixed Bloody Mary. As far as I can tell, this was the menu for special guests. As the brilliant strategist responsible for masterminding Howard Samuels' come-from-20-points-ahead gubernatorial defeat, twice I was invited to this feast.

The third time we met was in October 1974, and the publisher was interviewing me for the job of chief political correspondent and every-Monday columnist. Instead of food, Mrs. Schiff alternately smacked or stroked her yelping Yorkie into momentary submission. She had some questions. "Tell me," she inquired, her passive face transformed into wide-eyed wonder, "what was Howard Samuels' first wife *really* like?" The small dog darted about the room, breaking Mrs. Schiff's concentration. "Tell me," Mrs. Schiff blurted her second question, forgetting the first, "what was Howard Samuels' second wife *really* like?"

Work began in mid-November. On day three, almost half the newsroom converged and listened to their publisher's recorded voice. Their stomachs ached from laughter. They heard a taped debate the two gubernatorial candidates staged while paying obeisance to Mrs. Schiff in her upstairs office. The gladiators had been carefully prepared for combat, honing their positions on housing, crime, unemployment, and aid to private schools. Each of these issues bored the publisher, but she gamely feigned interest. Quite suddenly, after dutifully asking the necessary questions, Mrs. Schiff leaned forward and delivered the question uppermost

in her mind. "Tell me," she inquired of Hugh Carey, "what do you *really* think of Teddy Kennedy?"

I found out what Mrs. Schiff *really* thought of my inaugural column through very subtle means. No one shouted, growled or bitched. Monday's paper came and the column was simply not there. It had pleased my editor, but apparently not my publisher. Don't dare ask why, was the solemn advice proffered. Just quietly prepare another column the next week, close your eyes and pray she would forget to read it until it was already in print. Then only she would be responsible for the missing strawberries.

I requested an audience with Her Highness. My God, I was warned, *you don't really want to see her!* The game was to avoid her, don't risk exciting her. *What if she ever came down to the newsroom?*

At 5 p.m. the next day the three of us (counting the dog) met for nearly two hours. I was intent on discovering, specifically, what it was Mrs. Schiff found objectionable in the first column before I would write the second. She wanted to know when we ever agreed I would write a column? Or be called chief political correspondent? Or be paid such a large sum of her money? Besides, what did I *really* think of Samuels' second wife, anyway?

For more than an hour this wrestling match persisted. Each time I advanced one question she pummeled with 10. Then she tired. *Tell me, precisely, Mrs. Schiff, what was it that troubled you about the first column?* She stammered, rose to fetch the copy, returned to her soft chair, fixed her glasses and read silently. Ah, she now remembered, the word "likely" appeared twice in the same paragraph. That was one of her more substantive observations.

Downstairs, my colleagues were waiting to find out what had happened up there. One editor hustled me into executive editor Paul Sann's office and locked the door. He listened to what happened, phoned Sann at home and warned that Mrs. Schiff would probably be calling him at any moment. Terrified, Sann an-

nounced he was evacuating his home immediately. The next day, after two full weeks on the job, the paper's chief political correspondent also evacuated.

The next time Mrs. Schiff and I spoke was last May. An article I had written in *The Village Voice* drew parallels between the behavior of politicians and journalists. There was a brief mention that Mrs. Schiff sought to manage the news by insisting on approving each word of a magazine profile prior to publication. She phoned my editor to complain, requesting a retraction. I called her. No, she denied having word-for-word approval; yes, it was true that a precondition of all her personal interviews was that she possess, in her words, "the right to see the manuscript to correct factual errors and debate conclusions." She conceded reporters at the *Post* did not grant similar "rights" to their sources.

Suddenly our conversation veered. Mrs. Schiff warmly apologized for the way "my editors handled you." I said it really wasn't their fault. She said she was sorry. I said I was grateful it happened. She said, "I'm so glad we're now friends." Her newest friend told her she was too isolated, her employees too often reduced to craven fools or robbed of their fire.

Dolly agreed. Dolly said she was getting old, and tired. Maybe she had not done a good job. Nora Ephron, she remembered, had written that her former boss was essentially "a silly person." God, that angered her. "But maybe," the publisher who should have been a gossip columnist sighed sadly, "Nora was right. Maybe I am a silly person."

BY NORA EPHRON

I first met Mrs. Schiff a few weeks after I started working at the *Post*. I was summoned to lunch in her office, a privilege few other reporters were granted in those days, and the reason for it had mainly to do with the fact that my parents were friends of her daughter, and I suspect she felt safe with me, thought I was of her class or some such. "You're so lucky to be working," she said to me at that meeting. "When I was your age, I never did anything but

go to lunch." Mrs. Schiff's custom during these lunch meetings—perhaps as a consequence of spending so much of her youth in expensive restaurants at midday—was to serve a sandwich from the flystrewn luncheonette on the ground floor of the *Post* building. A roast beef sandwich. Everyone who had lunch with her got a roast beef sandwich. Lyndon Johnson, Bobby Kennedy and me, to name a few. She thought it was very amusing of her, and I suppose it was. She would sit on one of her couches, looking wonderful-for-her-age—and talk to whomever was on the other couch. There was, as far as I could tell, almost no way to have an actual conversation with her. She dominated, tantalized, sprinkled in little tidbits, skipped on to another topic. Once, I remember, she told me apropos of nothing that President Johnson had been up to see her the week before.

"Do you know what he told me?" she said.

"No," I said.

"He told me that Lady Bird fell down on the floor in a dead faint the other day, with her eyes bulging out of her head."

"Yes?" I said, thinking the story must go on to make a point, to relate to whatever we'd just been talking about. But that was it.

In the course of that first meeting, I asked Mrs. Schiff a question, and her answer to it probably sums her up better than anything else she ever said to me. The newspaper strike was still on—she had walked out of the Publishers' Association a few weeks before and resumed publication—and I was immensely curious about what went on during labor negotiations. I didn't know if the antagonists were rude or polite to one another. I didn't know if they said things like "I'll give you Mesopotamia if you'll give me Abyssinia." I asked her what it had been like. She thought for a moment and then answered. "Twenty-eight men," she said. "All on my side." She paused. "Well," she said, "I just ran out of things to wear."

Nora Ephron's reminiscence is excerpted from an article that originally appeared in Esquire. ■

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MURDOCH BUYS HIS 84TH

Australian Takes Over America's Oldest Daily

Now what will he do with it?

BY DOUG IRELAND

It was nearly five o'clock that Friday when Tom McCarthy, superintendent of the mail room, walked out onto the platform of the big building on South Street where the handlers were tossing wire-wrapped bundles of the 8-race final edition with the headline *PATTY HEARST FREE* onto the trucks. "Boys," McCarthy shouted, "we got ourselves a new boss!" A cheer went up from the handlers. "Jeez, she fucked us right to the end—she didn't even give us the headline," griped one veteran as he rubbed his hands against the chill East River wind. "Hey Tommy, is the new guy Jewish or what?" shouted another. Tom McCarthy gave them the few facts he knew about the man named Rupert Murdoch. Then the trucks began to pull out and as they moved through the thick Manhattan traffic the men on the trucks tried to figure out what it all meant: after 37 years of prideful ownership, Dorothy Schiff had sold the *New York Post*.

Upstairs in the city room, the mood was strangely calm. Rupert Murdoch had quietly arrived at South Street by taxi at 12:50 and was quickly whisked upstairs to Dolly Schiff's sixth-floor penthouse office-cum-drawing room. There, with few preliminaries—Dolly didn't even order the usual sandwiches she is wont to serve at lunchtime meetings—the 75-year-old Czarina of the *Post* first summoned her top business executives: Byron Greenberg, the paper's long-time treasurer, and the heads of the advertising and circulation departments. Only later were her two

top news chiefs, executive editor Paul Sann and managing editor Robert Spitzler, called to join the conference and given the word.

The rumor hit the city room a little after 2:00 when a reporter overheard an elevator conversation between a couple of accountants and Murdoch's presence in the building became known. At 3:45 Bob Spitzler casually mentioned that The Publisher (she is always spoken of in capital letters by most of her executives) wanted a photographer at 4:00—"and make sure he's wearing a tie." But it wasn't until 5:15 that Spitzler planted his tall, lanky frame by his desk for the brief, almost casual announcement to the men and women of the city room: Mrs. Schiff had signed a letter of intent to sell the paper to the 45-year-old Australian head of a communications empire encompassing 83 newspapers, magazines and television interests and stretching from Sydney to London and San Antonio.

Almost no one at the *New York Post* knew of the negotiations with Murdoch until that Friday. Although negotiations between buyer and seller had been going on for two months, their secrecy made the sale seem lightning swift.

Among those caught off guard were the executives at the *New York Daily News*, which for months has been planning to drop its early one-star Night Owl edition—a money loser—and put out an afternoon edition in competition with the *Post*.

Was it the imminence of this challenge to the *Post*'s position as the only afternoon newspaper left in New York City—as well as the impending January change in the inheritance tax laws to which she has attributed her decision—that made Schiff sell the *Post*? The

offer she finally accepted from Murdoch—reportedly \$31 million—was far from the first she had received. The Newhouse chain, former *Post* associate publisher and *Nation* editor Blair Clark, Franklin D. Roosevelt Jr., and *New York* magazine publisher Clay Felker are among the many who bid for the paper in recent years. Why sell now? And what kind of paper is it Murdoch has acquired?

Dorothy Schiff acquired the *Post* in 1935 at the request of her husband, the late George Backer. Two million dollars and four years later, she displaced Backer as editor, installed Ted Thackeray and turned the paper into a tabloid. In 1942, she installed Thackeray as her husband. All continued along a shared Rooseveltian political course during the war years, but in 1948 Thackeray stumped for Henry Wallace, while Dolly endorsed Thomas E. Dewey. Thackeray soon parted company with Dolly and founded the ill-fated *New York Compass*. Mrs. Schiff became editor-in-chief as well as publisher of her paper.

It was in the fifties that the *Post*'s image as a liberal paper was established (an image which, merited or not, continues to this day). In large measure because it became a target of Joe McCarthy, Jimmy Wechsler, by then editor, was hauled in front of the witch-hunting Senator's committee. In a time when few voices were raised against McCarthyism, the *Post*—both editorially and in its news columns—fought back. To be sure, the paper backed down on the Rosenberg issue, its rhetoric was often cast in a militantly anti-communist liberalism, and in 1958 endorsed Nelson Rockefeller for governor, but when *The New York Times* was firing reporters for past leftist or Communist affiliations, Dolly stood by hers.

The fifties was also the Wechsler decade at the *Post*—marked by tough, crusading investigative reporting. The specialty was the series: two, four, even six reporters working on one story. There was a 23-part series on the then powerful Walter Winchell, exposing his ghostwriters, his connections, the payoffs he

took. Westbrook Pegler and J. Edgar Hoover got similar treatment. Joe Kahn, prize-winning investigative reporter and one of the stars of that period, recalls: "I was doing a series on the ban on birth control information in the city health system, which hurt low-income women most. Mrs. Schiff had just acquired the *Bronx Home News*, 100,000 circulation, mostly Catholic. The pressure from the Archdiocese was tremendous. Letters were read from the pulpits denouncing the paper, denouncing Mrs. Schiff, all over the Bronx. But I stayed on the story, my copy wasn't touched, and nobody said a word. The paper in those years was the spokesman for labor, for the poor, and we did a lot of stories about stuff affecting these people. Hearst, Whitney, they all wanted to kill the *Post* because we were too liberal—because she was too liberal."

But the Eisenhower years were not hospitable to liberalism, not even in New York City, and by the end of the decade the paper's circulation had declined, advertising was down and Wechsler himself seemed tired. Conflicts between Wechsler and Paul Sann, the paper's other editorial power, developed. "Paul was much more 30s-oriented, recalls one *Post* veteran, "you know, Broadway, Times Square, crime, scandals, investigative stuff. Jimmy was a cause journalist. The two approaches collided. The paper was in trouble. Dolly chose Paul, and kicked Jimmy upstairs to editor of the editorial page."

Ironically, it was the great newspaper strike of 1961 that kept the paper alive. After going 117 days without publishing, Dolly withdrew from the Newspaper Publishers Association, settled separately with Bert Powers' Typographers and the other unions, and resumed publication. The strike eventually resulted in the death of five other papers, but the *Post* emerged with advertising and circulation gains. Then in 1965, the *World-Journal-Tribune* (an amalgam of Scripps-Howard's *World Telegram*, Hearst's *Journal-American*, and Jock Whitney's *Herald-Tribune*) died, removing the *Post*'s last afternoon competition. The paper's

Doug Ireland has written for *New York*, *The Village Voice* and was a *New York Post* reporter.

THE GUILD GETS READY FOR MURDOCH

Now that he's got it, what's he going to do with it?

One person who's going to have a major say in what Rupert Murdoch does with the *Post* is a man named Harry Fisdell. Harry Fisdell is the executive vice president of the Newspaper Guild of New York, AFL-CIO. The Guild, which represents 425 of the *Post*'s 1,100 employees, is the largest of the ten unions with which the paper has contracts. And the Guild's contract with the *Post* expires this coming March 31.

Harry is amiable. Harry is smart. Harry has a sense of humor.

Harry is also tough. Suggest to him that Murdoch might want to make some personnel changes at the *Post* and you find that out. "He ain't gettin' rid of nobody in Guild jurisdiction. We don't exist as a severance paying mechanism." That jurisdiction covers all but the top editorial personnel: executive editor Paul Sann; managing editor Robert Spitzler; assistant managing editor Al Ellenberg; editorial page editor Jimmy Wechsler; editorial writer Richard Montague; metropolitan editor Andy Porte; night assistant ME Alan Whitney; feature editor Joe Rabinowitz; and city editor Richard Belsky.

Harry learned what a union means when he worked on open-shop newspapers—(*The Philadelphia Inquirer* and the *Bergen Evening Record*). "I used to work for the *Post*. Went there in '58," Harry says. "I got active in the Guild because I'd found that without a union I had no control over my own destiny, my own future." Harry left his job as an inspector in the *Post*'s circulation department in 1966 to become the Guild's *Post* unit representative. In 1971, he ran for secretary-treasurer of the New York Newspaper Guild, and won.

Harry doesn't like to lose. "I look at every negotiation as a tough negotiation. You hope for the best, prepare for the worst."

Two women reporters now lead the Guild's *Post* unit: Barbara Yunker (the paper's medicine and science editor) chairs it, and she picked Joy Cook—coincidentally, a former city hall reporter for Murdoch's *San Antonio News*—to head the 15-member contract negotiating committee. Some people think that Yunker may not be tough enough. One of them is her predecessor, Miss Gerry. A *Post* institution and an assistant purchasing agent, Miss Gerry—she's always called that, and nobody is quite certain what her first name is—headed the *Post* Guild unit for 12 years until stepping down this year (she

recommended Fisdell for his first Guild job and served as first vice president of the New York Guild). "Barbara put some statement on the bulletin board after the paper was sold calling for cooperation with the new publisher or some such bullshit. I tore it down." On the other hand, Yunker's choice of Cook was a generally popular move. "I remember Joy from the last negotiation. She was tough, militant, cool," says Fisdell.

Two years ago, the Guild got a look at the *Post*'s books for the first time. Fisdell won't talk about what they found—"I'd be violating my word to management—but the *Post* employees gave up parity with the *News* and the *Times* (at the other two papers reporters got yearly increases in a three-year contract of \$25, \$20, and \$20, while the *Post*'s two-year contract gave a two-stage raise of \$20 and \$25). Obviously, the books showed a financially shaky paper. Parity, however, will undoubtedly be one of the issues on the bargaining table this year.

What are the others? Nobody's talking. "Look, the committee hasn't even formulated its demands yet," says Fisdell. Some say that Murdoch might want to shake up the advertising department, whose sluggish salesmen are represented by the Guild and who get paid whether they sell advertising or not. Fisdell defends his people: "How would you like to go out and try to sell ads in a paper that raised its price five cents above *The New York Times* and is losing circulation?" Mandatory retirement, which Dorothy Schiff tried to get in the last contract talks, may be a management demand (the *Times* has it—at age 70; the *News* does not). And pensions are almost certainly going to be on the table; the *Post* pays retired employees a meager \$75 a month after a minimum of 20 years, and unlike the *Times* and *News* does not have its own pension fund (it is part of a Guild-run plan).

"The *Times* is substantially ahead of us in salaries, particularly in the upper brackets," says Yunker. "The *News* is somewhat ahead, especially in benefits—pensions, insurance. Our biggest problem is that this paper is terribly understaffed. But you can't put that in the contract."

"What labor relations in the newspaper industry always boils down to," says another Guild veteran, "is power and the willingness to use it. All the rest is garbage."

Rupert Murdoch is a man with a reputation of being unafraid to use his power. "We don't regard him with suspicion or fear. We don't dislike him," says Fisdell. "We'd like to do what's best for the paper consistent with what's best for our people. We just don't know him."

They will. Soon.

—D.I.

circulation jumped from 400,000 to over 700,000. Yet now, with no afternoon competition in 11 years, the *Post*'s circulation has declined to 517,000. The drop can be attributed, in part, to the increasing attraction of television news and longer local news programs; stiff competition from all-news radio stations; rising newsprint costs; and The Publisher's disastrous decision to raise the paper's price to 25 cents, which, combined with subway fare rises, cut into the strap-hanger reader-

ship on which the afternoon paper depends.

But the more fundamental reason is the decline in quality suffered by the paper in the last ten years.

In the early sixties Paul Sann tried to make the paper attractive by substituting lively prose for the expensive investigative journalism of the previous decade. Al Davis, night managing editor in the late fifties, assembled a stable of writers who became the *Post*'s stars in the sixties: Norman

Poirier, Pete Hamill, Ed Kosner, Al Aronowitz, among others. But the paper just couldn't hold good writers. Ernest Tidyman, Jimmy Cannon, Nora Ephron, Earl Caldwell, Selwyn Raab, Seymour Krim, Charlotte Curtis, Don Forst, Gael Greene, Dick Kluger, Bill Haddad, Gene Smith, Tony Scaduto, Larry Merchant, Gerald Nachman, Jimmy Breslin... they all came and went. Jack Newfield and Bill Honan (now editor of the *New York Times*' Sunday Arts section)

didn't even make their tryouts.

"After the strike she told her execs she wanted a paper like the *World-Telegram*," says a *Post* staffer of that period. "She wanted the WASP readers, but she wanted the blandness. She got it. She emasculated her editors. She kept a small stable of management men in a constant state of fear and trembling, suspicion and doubt. It's like working in the Kremlin. Her toughness? A Katie Graham is tough toward the outside world. But Dolly didn't want

to offend anybody—all her toughness was directed inside, at her own people. It resulted in a total drying up of professional imagination. Everybody looking over their shoulder saying, 'oh, we can't do that, the old lady won't like it'."

And, too, the paper was being edited for an audience—middle class Jews—that was increasingly moving to Miami. Italian, Irish, black readers were never really sought out.

For several years now there simply has been no compelling reason to read the *New York Post*—other than for its stock prices and racing results. As one of the paper's walking wounded quips, "Sann deserves the Pulitzer Prize in survival for printing the point spread for gamblers."

So when most *Post* staffers heard of Rupert Murdoch's purchase of the paper, the attitude was one of resignation—"well, it can't get any worse"—and mild hope—"at least he'll put some money into it." How will the man that Fleet Street calls "the Aussie tit-and-bum king" handle his newest acquisition?

The son of a giant in Down-Under journalistic history, Sir Keith Murdoch, Rupert at 22 saw the newspaper chain his father built slip from family control. With the exception of one newspaper, the afternoon *Adelaide Daily News*. It was at this paper that young Rupert perfected the techniques he had learned as a junior sub-editor on Lord Beaverbrook's London *Daily Express*. And from that one paper Murdoch built an empire. He bought newspaper and television holdings all across Australia, New Zealand and finally London, where he owns the sensationalist *Sunday News Of The World* (16 million circulation) and the *Daily Sun* (3.6 million)—both of which were losing money when he acquired them, as was *London Weekend Television* in which Murdoch was a 40 per cent controlling interest. In England, Murdoch's News International Ltd., the holding company through which he controls his properties, has been engaged in a circulation war with the rival Mirror Group of newspapers. Sex and violence have been

his prime weapons in the battle. But he has struck other blows. In 1975, an 11-day printers' strike closed the Mirror's papers. Murdoch leapt in with largesse to retailers, heavy TV advertising, editorial sniping at the Mirror's "anti-unionism." After the strike, the *Sun* had 100,000 new readers—at a cost to Murdoch of \$1 million in promotion.

Murdoch spent \$5 million promoting the weekly *National Star*, his British-style entry into competition with the *National Enquirer* and the *Tattler*, and his first major American project. He also went through six editors. The *Star*'s circulation has leveled off at 1.1 million.

The *San Antonio Light* was among the Hearst corporation's most profitable newspapers until 1974, when Murdoch, in his second American project, acquired its competition, the *News* (and its sister morning paper, the *Express*). Murdoch slapped red ink across the front page of the *News*, performed such feats as headlining **THUGS HIJACK BEAUTY SALON** on the day Mao Tse-Tung died, and boosted circulation. In 1975, the *Light* lost money for the first time.

In an article in the November 1976 *Texas Monthly*, Griffin Smith Jr. describes the *News*' make-up: "The visual clamor is so great that on some days less than twenty lines of body type—'news'—can be found above the page-one fold. Serious world, national, state or even local stories are—well, they *aren't*. One randomly selected day . . . less than 25 per cent of the non-advertising linage was devoted to hard news, compared to 66 per cent on the same day in the *Houston Chronicle*, 66 in the *Dallas Times Herald*, 41 in the *Austin American-Statesman*, and 55 in the Ft. Worth *Star-Telegram*."

What kind of stories hit the front-page? Well, there was the one about a berserk Detroit Medical Examiner who carved up the goods in his morgue; it ran under the banner **CORPSES FOUND MUTILATED. TOWN MAY SCRATCH NUDISTS**. Another front-page offering—headlined **WEIRDO TRIES TO SEIZE GIRLS**—began: "A bowlegged weirdo was foiled here Thursday

in his attempt to kidnap two junior high school girls from a grocery store parking lot . . ."

Murdoch defends the *News*: "We didn't go in there with a whole team of Australians. We kept the same publisher. I think one managing editor retired. Oh, I had one design guy in there, as a consultant, but he's back in Australia now. Have you really looked at it? It's got a lot of good news stories. Crime? There's nothing wrong with that. It's legitimate. And people never talk about the *Express*. Here"—he shoves it across his desk—"there's the *Express*. Wouldn't you say that's a little dull?"

Rupert Murdoch is a charming man. He projects a non-imperial personality a little out of keeping with the austere, modern wood and glass suite of offices he occupies on the 26th floor of 730 Third Avenue on Manhattan's East Side.

"American journalists writing for popular papers here have forgotten their competition is television. There's too much color for color's sake and not enough fact. In the electronic media facts are packed in quickly.

"That's what the *Post* needs. More stories. There are tons of stories to be written about. I'm going to give the paper more newsprint, a tighter news hole, more space. Maybe if you give it more space the writers will shine."

Some *Post*-watchers are not as interested in shining writing as in where the paper is headed politically. Murdoch's defenders point to his involvement in the 1972 Australian election campaign on behalf of the victorious Labor Party as evidence of his progressivism. But Murdoch's support was conditional on a toning down of some of the more innovative economic measures in the Party's platform.

"What kind of politics will the *Post* have?" muses Murdoch. "Liberal . . . compassionate . . . internationally fairly conservative. If you look at our record elsewhere, we were against Vietnam but we're very suspicious of Russia, especially in Europe. I've grown more conservative fiscally than I used to be, but that's because I've lived in England for six

years and have seen what 20 per cent inflation can do to the country. But there are millions of underprivileged people here in this city, who need a popular paper whose job it is to speak for them . . . to *care* about them.

"I think there's going to be more political coverage in the paper. More of Washington, more of Albany and total coverage of city politics. I may be misreading it, but I can't conceive of a more political audience than the current New York middle class readership so vital to the *Post*."

And what if the *Daily News* does come into the afternoon field?

Murdoch sits up, plants his elbow on the desk, and spits out: "Then we're in for a very interesting, old-fashioned newspaper war. We'd have to move into the morning against *them*, either with the *Post* or with a new newspaper. Look, the implications of that move are tremendous. I don't think they're going to do it. I know there's been a lot of planning over on 42nd Street, but that's quite different from the people in the board room in Chicago deciding to lay out the money. It would take a lot of money."

As for staff, Murdoch won't discuss names. At Costello's, the 44th Street saloon that's a favorite hangout for both the *National Star* crowd and the New York *Daily News* people, some people have been touting Jim Brady as a major *Post* editorial force. But Murdoch says no: "he's a very talented man, knows a lot about fashion, the garment business, advertising . . . and he does know the writers. But an editorial role? . . . I don't think so." Neal Travis, a former editor of the *Australian*, is rumored to be a city room power. And then there's Jerry Lisker, former national sports editor at the *Daily News* and currently with the *Star*; Peter Michelmore, overseas bureau chief in New York for Murdoch's Australian and British papers; and Ray Kerrison, the *Star*'s former racing editor.

Will there be one strong editor brought in?

"Well, a lot of people think there is one—Sann . . . besides, I'll be there."

THEY DON'T SHOOT REPORTERS, DO THEY?

The Mafia May Threaten, But It's Usually Been Hands-Off When It Comes To The Press

Does the murder of Don Bolles signify a change in the rules?



Don Bolles, reporter for the Arizona Republic, was killed by a bomb planted in his car and detonated by remote control.

UPI

BY DAVID M. ALPERN

The mob doesn't kill cops and reporters. This is not a Mafia case. Don Bolles wouldn't have lived 11 days if this was a Mafia job.

—Maricopa County (Arizona) D.A. Donald Harris

A tradition about reporters? It's one of those baseless myths. They would do anything; there's no Robert's Rules of Order when you're dealing with the Mafia.

—Ed Norton, New York Daily News

Arizona authorities and a team of top-notch reporters from around the country are still following up the case of *Phoenix Republic* investigative reporter Don Bolles. But Bolles' death, after a remote-controlled bomb blew apart his little Datsun last June, has already raised some chilling questions about the rules of the game that reporters play—particularly those, like Bolles, whose subject is often organized crime.

Many of those reporters believe that there is a tradition, an *understanding* at least, that protects journalists who write about underworld activities. Others think it is simply common sense on the part of Mafia leaders who fear the publicity that revenge against a reporter might bring. "They can kill us with typewriters," mobster Vincent Theresa

once quoted a *capo* complaining. On the other hand, some journalists I talked with took the cynical view that their safety was little more than proof that nothing they wrote was really worth a Godfather's concern—much less a fatal contract.

Whatever the reason, few reporters who write about the Mafia have been rubbed out in recent years. Yet few of these journalists have totally escaped pressure in one form or another—and most take precautions by second nature. "It's something you live with from day to day," says *Newsday*'s Tom Renner, author of several books about the Mafia (including one on Vinny Theresa) and one of the investigative reporters assigned to dig into the Arizona Connection.

It's also a feeling you don't easily forget. Anthony Scaduto is now a successful author on subjects as disparate as Bob Dylan and, in a new work called *Scapegoat*, the Lindbergh kidnap trial. But Scaduto still recalls the fear expressed by his Sicilian father when young Tony became a crime reporter for the *New York Post* in the 1950s. "He freaked out and wrote me a tearful letter about how you can get yourself killed playing around with those people," says Scaduto, who grew up in a Brooklyn neighborhood with its share of Mafia characters. In fact, it was through the local grapevine that Scaduto received one of the few real scares of his career.

"I had just written a series on the five big Mafia leaders," Scaduto remembers, "and one of them—Joe Profaci—was visiting a friend

David M. Alpern is a general editor of *Newsweek*.

who happened to be my uncle's business partner. As the story came down to me, Profaci said, 'What's wrong with that Scaduto? He was such a nice boy. How could he do such a thing? Tell Scaduto I'm mad at him.'

"We took it as a threat and I told my uncle's partner's son to find out how serious it really was. Then we waited. Finally, he came back with a message from Profaci: 'Tell him not to worry. We never touch reporters. Too much heat.' And that's pretty much the attitude."

How did the Mafia learn that lesson? According to veteran crime reporter Hank Messick, it may have been in Detroit during the summer of 1930 when an epidemic of homicides involving the infamous Purple Gang and a group called The Little Jewish Navy went almost entirely uncontrolled by the local authorities. Messick tells the story in a chapter of his book, *The Private Lives of Public Enemies*:

These and other events gave pioneer radio newscaster Jerry Buckley several hot scoops. His studio was located on the Mezzanine [of the LaSalle Hotel, where a number of the murders had taken place]. Annoyed by the police's inability to solve the murders, Buckley led a crusade to recall the mayor. No one suggested he was crooked—he just seemed unconcerned... A recall election was set for July 22. In the fourteen days before the vote there were eleven gang killings. Buckley made good use of the casualties. By one o'clock on the morning after the election, he was able to broadcast news of victory. In a happy mood, he quit his studio and settled down in the hotel lobby to read the *Free Press* election extra.

The lobby was virtually deserted when three men wearing the pearl-gray hats made fashionable by Al Capone walked in. Much time passed before they were identified as Russell Syracuse, Joe (the Wop) English and John ("Giovanni") had been discarded) Mirabella.

One man stopped by the door; the others walked over to Buckley. As he looked up, they produced revolvers and

fired six shots each. Only one bullet missed. With eleven slugs in his body, Jerry Buckley tumbled forward on his face. Very dead.

For once a do-gooder was given an elaborate and emotional send-off. Detroiters turned out for Buckley's funeral an estimated 50,000 strong. And the newspapers took up the cry: "Who killed Jerry Buckley?"... Almost every hood in Detroit, and some from other cities, were suspected of Buckley's murder, and so many left town that the Purple Gang was reduced to doing its own killing. (Such heat was created that, thirty years later, the memory of it may have saved my own life. A group of the boys gathered in Newport to discuss what should be done about my stories in the *Louisville Courier-Journal*. Younger men favored fitting me with a "Newport Nightgown," a wrapping of concrete, and dropping the body in the Ohio River, but older hands cited the example of Jerry Buckley to illustrate the dangers of killing newsmen.)

A classic case of a different sort from that era involved *Chicago Tribune* reporter Alfred J. (Jake) Lingle, shot in broad daylight at a downtown Illinois Central station. The *Trib* was all set to kick off a public outcry similar to that in the Buckley case when it was discovered that the reporter had taken gifts from Al Capone and done favors for other gangsters. The assumption was that the mob had simply done some internal house-cleaning. Which leads current *Tribune* columnist Robert Wiedrich, an old mob specialist, to enunciate the First Rule of Mafia Coverage: "If you don't take their money or get in bed with them, you're probably pretty safe. Of course they'll resort to some childish stuff now and then—telephone calls, obscenities, a little tail job to harass or frighten you into a little sweat—but never any major overt acts."

Working as a public relations "adviser" for the wrong company or labor union, or accepting a loan or a dream deal on a new home from some real estate agent or politician can also turn an unsuspecting journalist into someone

the mob may think it owns. "You just have to learn to say no," says Wiedrich. Another good way to get into trouble, says one New York-based writer, is to go through a Mafia chain of command on a confidential basis in order to arrange a top-level interview, then start naming the names of all those you talked with. "A guy has a certain responsibility to follow the rules," this writer says. For the forgetful reporters, the mob's avenger may not be a mobster at all, he adds, but a corrupt cop who sets up a phony incident or a case of mistaken identity to do his heavy leaning. "I know for a fact that mob guys hire cops for this kind of dirty work."

But the greatest danger, most crime reporters seem to agree, is from the "non-professionals": gangland kooks and crazies, young punks trying to make their reputations, businessmen who try to buy gunslingers and extremists of all stripes. "The big names—Gambino, Galante, even Joe Colombo, who hated our guts—would never have anything done to a reporter," says *Newsday's* Renner. "But that doesn't mean there aren't cowboys who get ideas and think they're doing some good for themselves." Says investigative reporter Nicholas Gage of *The New York Times*: "The guys I've received threats from have generally been on the fringes of the Mafia or political extremists—these are the kind of guys I'm afraid of—and the undisciplined groups in narcotics. The Mafia has been the least of my concerns in 12 years doing this kind of work."

A minority view among Mafiaologists is that they remain safe because their work is relatively harmless as far as the *capos* are concerned. "You're not a threat, you're an irrelevancy," says one journalist who spent years on the crime beat in New York. "Their world has nothing to do with what you write about them. The Italian Mafia only cares what happens to them, and what's written in the papers is generally nothing that the cops don't already know. Because if the cops don't know, you've got no corroboration and your editors won't run it."

Ed Norton, who wrote about

local crime and politics for the Paterson (N.J.) *Morning Call* and now works for the *Daily News's* New Jersey edition, shares some of the same cynicism. The reason few reporters have been rubbed out by the Mafia, he says, is that, "frankly, in too many places, they've already corrupted too many and are just not worried about them." Also, Norton agrees, the stories that do get printed are "generally post-facto kind of stuff. Infrequently you'll hear about some scam going on right now, but much of the time you can't write about it because it's too ticklish from a legal point of view. But you can't have it both ways; you can't break news about underworld doings and also have 40 affidavits, two confessions and six indictments to back it up."

Over the years, so the argument goes, the Mafia has learned about these limiting facts of journalistic life. "The best thing that ever happened to the Mafia," laughs freelance Nicholas Pileggi, a former AP reporter, "is that none of them went to the Columbia School of Journalism or read Clay Felker on the importance of the media—so they retain some insight about the way the world really works."

Untrue! say most of the crime reporters I talked with, and they point to a sizeable pile of published evidence (often, not surprisingly, with their own bylines).

Wiedrich, in Chicago, maintains that there are still any number of instances where local reporters have picked up on new mob trends in loan-sharking or the infiltration of legitimate business—and that the very vastness of some underworld investments have made them satisfying targets. "Years ago if you put them down for a month or two it meant a couple of thousand bucks lost," he says. "But when they began putting money into legitimate business it meant that a good exposé could cost 'em millions. I remember closing down a big insurance company here—and it felt like quite an achievement."

Wiedrich also notes a high degree of sensitivity by mob types about stories involving their families—a search for respect that it pains them grievously to



Who broke whose rule here? Chicago Trib reporter Alfred (Jake) Lingle (inset) murdered by mob in 1930. After outpouring of public indignation at his funeral (above) it was discovered he'd taken favors from the mob, and his death may have been "internal housecleaning."

UPI

have stripped away." A smart reporter, he suggests, will not go out of his way to write unfairly about Mafia offspring or kin not involved in the family business, and he provides a personal illustration:

"In the mid-sixties, I went to Phoenix, where some Chicago hoods (rhymes with "moods" in Chicago-ese) had bought a ranch northeast of the city, the site of the last battle between the Apaches and the cavalry in those parts. They had a landing strip and a clientele consisting of colleagues from New York, Cleveland and Detroit. It was pretty obvious that the Chicago bunch had organized a sanctuary, and I went out there to find out. I remember walking up to a guy called Sam (Butch) English to ask him just what was going on, and he said, 'You're here to eat up my son [who must have gotten into a good college or something]'. I said, 'No'; he said, 'Yeah.' Finally I said, 'You have my word that I'm not gonna mention your son.' In the end, I really pounded the guy's ass and they had to sell the ranch. But I didn't

mention the kid. And I got a call months later from a mob lawyer who told me, 'Sam says thanks.'

Gage also recalls the period when Joseph Colombo launched his Italian-American Civil Rights League to stir up passions about an alleged vendetta by the FBI and the press against a lot of upstanding citizens whose names happened to end in vowels. "He had support from Carlo Gambino and it was beginning to pay off," Gage says. "Then I did a page-one piece on Joe Colombo's other family and connections between some IACRL storefronts and the mob. Gambino pulled away; there was too much attention." And Colombo himself was eventually shot down at an IACRL rally in Columbus Circle. The suspected brains behind that blast was Joe (Crazy Joey) Gallo, as followers of real-life Godfather tales will surely recall. And when Gallo was subsequently gunned down at a restaurant in Little Italy, Gage reported the names of the likely killers. "If there was ever a reason to kill someone, that was it," he

says. But Gage emerged unscathed.

Blasé as they may be about the potential threats, reporters who cover the underworld do take some sensible precautions. Tom Renner makes sure that his children are accompanied to and from the school bus after getting threatening calls. Gage lives in a Manhattan apartment building selected specifically for its security features, including fire stairs that cannot be entered from the street. He also has his door locks cemented in place. "It would take them half an hour to break through," Gage says. "Sometimes people call up and say things like, 'That story this morning is going to get you in a lot of trouble. If I were you I'd watch myself.' So instead of going home in the subway I take cabs for a week and then forget about it."

The point, it seems, is not to be a captive of one's own fears. Tony Scaduto remembers using the old matchstick-in-hood trick to make sure his car was not tampered with during an investigation involving

Tough Tony Anastasia in upstate Utica, New York. "I was getting heavy flak, mostly from wives of some of the men I was interested in," he says. "On the second morning, I noticed the match was gone. I was really scared. I got a flashlight and looked all through the car, but no bomb. Then I realized that it had been pretty windy and rainy during the night and the match was probably just washed away. How paranoid can you get?"

For Bob Wiedrich, "it actually got to the point about 10 years ago that I carried a pistol—until I finally realized I was more of a danger to myself carrying a gun than the mob would be." Now, listening to Wiedrich talk about the hoods of the old days, you almost catch a whiff of nostalgia. "In this neck of the woods, at least, the mob is dying," he says. "The old dons are very old or dead... and there don't seem to be as many sons and nephews as in New York to take over. There just ain't that much to write about. It used to be that every week I could make a column out of a good mob story; now I could go six months without one. It's gotten to the stage that I almost can't spell the names anymore," he laughs.

Of course, with the old Mafia fading away in some places and spreading itself into ever larger affairs of varying legitimacy in others, an important question for reporters is whether the old codes—or whatever—will continue to apply to the mob's new heirs and silent partners. Tom Renner thinks that so far they have. "If that wasn't the case, there would be more reporters being hit—and I haven't heard of any." Others, like Tony Scaduto, think that Don Bolles was probably ordered killed by supposedly legitimate types who may have taken some Mafia money for one scheme or another—but not its code or even its good sense. And Jack Newfield of *The Village Voice*, an investigative reporter who focuses on politics and government, adds a further element of mystery to the debate by musing, "I don't know anymore where Mafia money ends and Rockefeller money begins." But that, conspiracy fans, is another story.

CAN THIS MAN BREAK THE NETWORK STRANGLEHOLD?

Group W's Donald McGannon Blasts Programming Dictators

"Infinite upper limits on profitability aren't reasonable."

BY DAVID M. RUBIN

The good news for the television networks these days is the record amount of money they are making. The bad news is the federal government's continuing attempt to break the power of CBS, NBC and ABC to shape American television. For the past six years, the FCC's prime-time access rule has transferred 30 minutes from the networks to the local stations (usually the period from 7:30 to 8:00 p.m.), time the networks would prefer to fill themselves. The Justice Department is prosecuting an anti-trust suit against the webs (recently settled with NBC) which will strictly limit their ownership and syndication of programs they air. Justice dropped another bombshell at the end of November when it asked the FCC to study whether the networks should be ordered to sell their 15 owned-and-operated television stations. That loss would cost the networks millions of dollars in profits each year and would lessen their control over the market for syndicated programs.

Even the 600-odd affiliates of the networks, usually content to count their money, have become defiant. They used to bestir themselves only to complain about the arrogance of Dan Rather toward Richard Nixon. But the affiliates recently forced the webs to abandon plans to expand the evening news to one hour—an expansion which would have taken 30 minutes away from the local stations.

The point man for much of this agitation against the networks is Donald H. McGannon, the 56-year-old chairman of the board and president of Westinghouse Broadcasting. McGannon's "Group W" is the largest broadcast chain (with the exception of the networks) in the country, with nine radio stations, including WINS in New York, and five major-market television stations in Baltimore (WJZ), Boston (WBZ), Philadelphia (KYW), Pittsburgh (KDKA) and San Francisco (KPIX). McGannon, the father of 13 children, has been head of Group W for the past 22 years.

While most affiliates shy away from confronting the networks, McGannon has been publicly criticizing them for violent programming, excessive advertising and poaching on affiliate time. He finds their behavior toward the public and the local broadcaster impossibly arrogant. McGannon fired his biggest cannon at the networks in early September when he petitioned the FCC to redress the balance of power between networks and affiliates. McGannon is not so radical in his demands as his friend Nicholas Johnson, the former FCC Commissioner. Group W stations are, after all, the most profitable in their markets. But he does paint a realistic picture of how television is likely to change in the next ten years.

David M. Rubin is an associate editor of MORE.

He discussed the petition and outlined his complaints against the networks in an interview in his 18th floor office at 90 Park Avenue in New York.

Within the past few weeks, the networks have publicly abandoned plans to expand their evening news programs to an hour. You played a key role in pushing them back into this position by rallying the affiliates around the country and by petitioning the FCC to examine whether the networks ought to take over another chunk of local time. What's wrong with an hour of network news?

I'm not opposed to an hour of network news. I'm opposed to an hour of network news that's going to have a negative impact on local news. I'm opposed to an hour of network news that's going to mean just a longer period of the same format. . . . I think one must recognize that there's been a couple of decades of Indian wrestling between networks and stations on the question of time. Whose time is whose? Certain segments of the day have been sort of doled over to the networks. I think the deed has been too broad because it makes it extremely difficult for the local stations to do much programming in prime time. . . . At the present time, if I recall correctly, 68 per cent of all the time in the broadcast day is programmed by the networks. There was a drop in 1971 when they put through the prime-time access rule, but they've picked all that up already and now they're back to the original level.

Do you think there's a chance the networks will consider your suggestion for an hour of news in prime time?

I was not being facetious when I suggested they put on a news analysis or commentary program at 9 p.m. Our stations were willing to take five half-hours a week, 52 weeks a year, with no compensation from the network. That's moderately big money.

How much would that have been?

Sixty or seventy thousand dollars. I wish they would pick it up, but I don't expect they will. I don't see them going into their own time now. At the network level, at the moment, they're psyched out on shares and audiences and demographics to the point where I don't think there's going to be any serious departure. With ABC having a shot at number one and CBS in the throes of management changes, I don't think you can expect anything new from the networks for the next couple of years or more.

In your petition to the FCC filed September 3, you asked the Commission to permit the affiliates of each network to band together and negotiate with the networks over some of your differences. How do the networks treat you now?

I must confess they tend to take on a very superior attitude with



McGannon: *This broadcasting maverick has big plans for the big network execs. He wants to cut them down to size.*

Cynthia Johnson

their stations, and therefore establishing a dialogue is difficult. I don't know how they regard me in particular. I'm sure I'm not their favorite person. . . . I have gone to the networks to talk to them on several different occasions and they make it clear that not only are they not interested in talking, but they're not going to do a goddamn thing about the situation we're talking about. . . . At one point, one of the network executives said, "Tell me, what do you want me to do?" I said I'd like to enter into a series of discussions with you about all these questions. There must be some way we can bring about a reconciliation. And he said, "Hell, no. We have nothing to talk about." We were talking about compensation rates, and in the case of our station KPIX out on the coast, it hasn't had an increase from the network in 15 years . . . We're not starving to death. Don't misunderstand me. We're not going in with a tin cup and asking them to help us out. That's not the issue. The issue is equity between the local stations and the networks. What should be the balance between us? . . . I tell you there are damn few businesses that can be conducted where one party can be aloof, and, if you will, so preemptive in their attitudes as the networks are.

Group W has stations affiliated with each of the networks. Do you find the attitude of one of the networks better or different from the others?

It's basically monolithic. There is one network person, a very fine person, who takes great pains to listen. In that case our dialogue has been better, particularly on the question of crime and violence in programming and in giving us an advance look at that programming. In that case there is a higher level of communication. In the other two situations it is really quite poor.

Which network is more responsive?

NBC. And David Adams, a vice chairman. He's held several positions at NBC over the years.

You're among the most outspoken of station owners toward the networks. What about your fellow owners? Do they feel the same way?

There is not a single attitude among affiliates on this subject at all. . . . The reasons vary from licensee to licensee. One case could involve a station that was perhaps sold in recent years, and the purchase price was a very substantial amount of money. They have significant debt. They are an NBC or CBS affiliate. That's a very important thing for those people to think about, a very significant thing. I can understand that at this time they may not want to rock the boat. They made cash projections. Our stations don't have mortgages, we don't have debts.

Do you think the networks are concerned that the affiliates may actually band together to negotiate with them?

Since the time we indicated we were going to file the petition, I have had no—repeat, no—conversations or correspondence with the networks.

How about with some of the other chain owners, such as Corinthian or Capital Cities?

I've had a moderate amount of conversation, not with Corinthian, but with others in the industry by virtue of having mailed the petition to them. . . . There's been a good exchange, enough to make a connection. There are a group of people who feel very strongly about it.

One step in reducing the power of the networks would be to force them to sell their owned-and-operated stations. Are you in favor of that?

No. Bear in mind that when the networks do not have owned-and-operated stations, they are no longer licensees, and I assume at that point they would have fewer circumstances to be involved with the FCC or with regulation. I like them to have the sort of sensitivity toward broadcasting that comes with being a licensee. If the Commission has another reason for doing it, that's up to them. Traditionally the networks have argued that they had to have their owned-and-operated stations to supply them with the funds to run the network. . . . That argument is not present anymore because the networks make considerably more money than their stations do.

But you wouldn't go so far as to force them to sell their stations?

I don't know what would be achieved by it. I really don't. I mean, yes, there would be a power reduction, and there are some cases where their power is a serious problem. It's very difficult in the syndication business today to support a syndicated series without having the networks' owned-and-operated stations buy it.

In your petition you also ask the FCC to order the networks to pre-screen programs for their affiliates so they know what they're going to be showing on the air in their local communities. I had assumed all along, obviously incorrectly, that you always see in advance what the networks are programming. Why is that not the case?

There are a whole host of reasons. . . . Going back a few years, the attitude was that the networks should be making the judgment for the national medium the same way the local stations make it for local programming. There is also a preoccupation, frankly, by some of the affiliates, with not wanting to get involved in the situation. . . . There are also logistical problems involving pickup dates—the dates on which the networks can exercise options on existing programs and carry them over into the next season. They like to make those dates as late as possible. . . . I don't think they need to hold a show until the middle of July deciding whether or not to repeat it. But let's say they exercise the option on July 15. A month's vacation for the stars brings you up to the middle of August. They go into production with the series which is scheduled to go on the air the 30th of September. So from the very beginning you have a very short time limit. I think there are cases where nobody has seen the final cut of a particular program. Just the producer—no broadcaster.

Is it possible for a show to air on a local station that no one at the station has seen until it's actually on the screen?

Possible? It happens every day of the week, on every station. Every day of the week.

So they are as surprised as the audience when violence appears on the screen?

Sometimes they don't know about it until someone from the audience complains. . . . We began to talk about this problem with the networks and the first year was complete frustration. I think we pre-empted one or two things. We quasi-symbolically pre-empted a new series called "Hot L Baltimore," which was really a faint gesture because, well, it was a weak show, a crummy show. It didn't have anything like the violent overtones that have come later. Except there were many cases where they denigrated significant social values. They made old people act like idiots. They set up weird situations in this old hotel where two prostitutes hung out. The prostitutes were sort of everyone's friends. On one occasion they had a person who dropped dead in their room and they brought him down and sat him in the lobby with a hat on.

This was an ABC show you pre-empted on your Baltimore affiliate?

Right.

How did they react to that?

Oh, impatiently. They were kind of annoyed.

Were you able to make any progress in pre-screening shows?

The next year we said the focal point of this situation is Hollywood, so we now employ a guy there who spends 80 to 90 per cent of his time going from network to network, producer to producer, talking to them. Again, there is a wide variation in acceptance. Some places can scarcely tolerate us. In other cases there is, if you will, a moderate degree, a fair degree, of accommodation. We had a show this year on NBC which we'd been talking about for a long time. We were objecting to it on a couple of different grounds. There's a madam involved in a big shakedown operation and she's also got some underworld connections. Somebody moves in on her on a given day and there is this first violent situation. She's in this huge bubble bath and you see somebody standing there, and he takes a connected hairdryer and throws it into the tub and

she's electrocuted. Then they want to know where her trick book is. So they grab these two guys who are suspects and take them up to the 15th story of an apartment building and hang one guy over the edge and drop him off. You see all the shots of him, spreadeagled, coming down, and then you see him on the sidewalk. Then they promptly do the same thing to the second man. Then they find another guy who is suspected of having the trick book and they take him to a warehouse. He's a cardiac patient and because of the pressure of being pushed around he has an attack. He has nitroglycerin tablets in his pockets, but when he tries to take them out, they knock them out of his hand and then stand there kicking the bottle around while this old man dies. Well, we said to NBC that this presents all kinds of problems, you know? The situation involving the balcony and the hair dryer was, literally, something kids could imitate. . . . I thought the whole thing was inordinately cruel to human beings.

You saw this in production or after it was finished?

We saw it in its last days of production. They made some promises to us. They cut some from the drop off the balcony, and they cut a little footage from the bathtub scene. They did nothing with the nitroglycerin scene. We ran the show.

Do you think they made the cuts in response to your man on the scene? If he hadn't been there, do you think they would have gone ahead with the show as planned?

Please don't think this was significant. In my opinion it was not significant. . . . There was a substantive amount yet to be done that was not treated. . . . We have become more effective this season because we got wise to their editing of feature films and the feature films were getting so tough. We found out how the feature films are handled and we are having a very good impact in this area. . . . Even with movies there still is, in my opinion, something short of what I would regard as adequate notice, adequate screening, to guard against these ultra-violent movies. . . . We're saying to the networks, "Don't you de-

cide," and we're saying to the FCC, "Don't you decide" what should go on the air. That's the responsibility of the local broadcaster. Presumably we'll differ among ourselves. But we want to have the chance to seriously review these things, in sufficient time before air time to handle it and also not to mislead the public. The public gets really teed off when they think they're going to see feature "X" on a given night and we come along and, in their mind, moralistically or otherwise, pre-empt the program. They really read us off, and I think they have a right. . . . We think this is the responsibility of the local licensee, but we can't do it if the present situation is maintained. The old rule that the networks are going to do it for us is not working, and therefore we have to have a change.

Do you think the networks are irresponsible in running the violent shows they do?

I don't think they're irresponsible people *per se*. . . . but I think they're going to foul this medium as a public medium and as an economic situation. . . . When your objective in putting material on the air is wholly and simply to capture the 18-to-49 age-group and get your share of the audience up, I submit then you have to consider the social consequences of that programming. If a particular program has a violent sequence in it, I think the public today is well able to handle it, even though I'm not at all sure it's reflective of our society. But I know it's not reflective of our society, cruel and violent as it is, that 85 to 90 per cent of the 9 p.m. to 11 p.m. time period should have the kind of violent programming it has.

However misguided its origin, the family hour was advanced by the networks as a method for reducing sex and violence in prime time before 9 p.m. Did Group W support the family hour concept? What was your reaction to the ruling of U.S. District Judge Warren J. Ferguson when, in early November, he struck down the family hour concept because of the way in which it had been forced on the industry by the FCC?

Family Hour was an attempt to do something in this connection,

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but it was misguided and I think mistaken. The people who participated are all fine people, and I know them well, but anyone who thinks that at 9 p.m. a curtain descends in the average American home and that tender youth goes to bed is deluded. I made the unfortunate comment when asked about this before that I thought it was a charade. And I called it a charade because CBS went through the gesture of taking Archie Bunker out of 8 p.m. on Saturday night, a spot it had been in for years. The show had certain sophisticated tones to it and on balance, in my opinion, was an acceptable show for 8 p.m. on Saturday night. They moved it to 9 p.m. at the beginning of the week in order to have it come outside Family Hour. Very shortly after that they put reruns on at three in the afternoon. Now, please explain that to me . . . They put it right back where there is a tremendous audience of school children . . . The Family Viewing Hour is, I think, a delusion . . . If you are willing to admit that there is a potential degree of influence in the behavioral patterns of those young people in the area of violence and cruelty, then I think we have to do something more than Family Hour.

Judge Ferguson went even further and said that if the Commission determines that certain types of programming "are injurious to the public health" and "inconsistent with the public interest," they might take action to remove them from the air. Would you be in favor of this sort of intervention by the Commission?

I think it's a very sensitive area . . . I don't know how they would reach the judgment that it's injurious to the public welfare . . . If we have, as we do, 800 broadcasters and three networks making judgments independently of each other . . . then the public wouldn't have to worry. I wouldn't want the FCC necessarily making those judgments. They're all good men. But hell, they may come up with something entirely too restrictive, or maybe they'll do something far too liberal from an individual's point of view . . . That's a tremendous concentration of power.

Then what is the most realistic path out of the problem of escalating violence on television, given that you are worried about further FCC control?

Let the community know where the responsibility lies and have the individual local broadcaster meet those responsibilities. . . . At least there should be a dialogue in which people can participate effectively and say, "I don't like this" or "I do like that." When my licenses come up for renewal, they can write to the FCC about it or file an application to deny my renewals. There is machinery that can be used. Nothing is being done now. All the decisions are being made at 19,000 feet and nobody can get involved in the act. There's too much concentration in control now. Three men, maybe a few more, at the three networks are making these decisions.

Is there some way the affiliates, in concert, could break the programming grip of the networks?

In this industry we have developed a sort of *modus operandi* in which the three networks and/or their three affiliates in a market program similar formats against each other. Violence against violence against violence. In the early part of the day it's soap against soap against soap, news against news against news. It's a valid business judgment, although I'm not sure I can sustain it philosophically. This, however, creates a very serious problem. The serious problem is that local public affairs programming can never—repeat, never—achieve audience penetration as long as this condition exists . . . What I would like from the FCC is a policy statement by which local stations, without violating antitrust law, can agree on time periods in which children's programs and public affairs programs could be run in competition with each other.

Do you think you could convince your fellow broadcasters in Group W markets to go into such a pact?

Cold turkey? No. No, I think that's where leadership comes into the situation. I don't want the FCC telling us to do any particular programming . . . I don't want

them coming down and saying you ought to take that off and put this on . . . We're not a very gummy medium. We're not going to stand up for a particular program, do or die. We're quite pragmatic. As a consequence, I think leadership is extremely important . . . My suggestion for the FCC was that the assistant U.S. attorney general from the individual community sit in with the broadcasters at a meeting in which they talk about one time period, that's all. A U.S. attorney sits there and it's understood that when that meeting breaks up, the only thing we've decided is that at 4 p.m., five days a week, we're all going to produce a program aimed at a single sector of the audience.

In 1964 you won the NAB's award for distinguished service in broadcasting. In 1976 Group W was kicked out of the NAB for refusing to subscribe to the NAB code. What do you object to in the code and why is Group W not a subscriber?

Group W was concerned that the code was watering down some of its own standards on what sorts of advertisements could be accepted on television for the sake of the dollar.

Did you object to the increasing number of commercials?

I'm not opposed to a 30-second announcement *per se*. I am opposed to the idea that the 30-second spot should double the number of announcements in a given time period.

Now I understand the networks are thinking of adding another minute of ads per half hour of prime-time programming. Is that correct?

Yes. It bothers me greatly . . . Can you imagine increasing commercial content in a year in which the industry is making by far the greatest amount of money it has made in its lifetime?

Is there any way your stations can protest the addition of another commercial minute by the networks?

This happened several years ago when there was this thing called "Batman" and we said, "Go ahead, put a fourth minute in 'Batman,' but we're only clearing three minutes of ads for it."

What did you do when they ran the fourth minute?

We covered it with a public service announcement.

And you might do that again if the networks add another prime-time minute?

Well, we certainly are going to consider that as an alternative. They have not done it yet. It is only a rumor. I don't know the circumstances under which it's going to be presented and therefore I don't want to prejudge the situation. But shouldn't this industry be smart enough to look at itself and say, "You know, we are a commercial medium, and we are also a news-entertainment-instructional medium, and there has to be some tolerance between the content of those two situations."

How do you measure progress in television programming?

When I was at a conference at Stanford in 1958 I met a man from the University of California named Frank Baxter. He was on a panel with Lou Cowan of CBS and Jim Aubrey, who was then with ABC. Someone put the question to Frank, "How do you describe the responsibility of broadcasters as far as programming is concerned? Should everything be educational or informative?" He said, "No. I don't think it should be. There should be variety and diversity." And then he said, "Take any period of time that you're broadcasting and determine for yourself whether you've left the viewer one cubit higher." That's all. By exciting him, by challenging him, by alarming him, just leave him a little bit higher. That really says a hell of a lot to me. I don't have to do monumental things at 7:30 every night. But let's look at it and see what it does for the public generally. Is it entertaining them? Fine. But what else is it doing for them? After you've entertained them to a point where they're overentertained, then what do you do? I find that very exciting.

It is frequently said that ever since Frank Stanton left the presidency of CBS, the broadcast industry has been without an effective spokesman or moral leader. Do you agree?

I saw Frank at a dinner the other night and I said to him, "Frank, we could sure use you now." ■

CONFESSION FEVER: TALES OF BETRAYAL AND HEARTBREAK

Writing About Relationships — From The Inside — Has Become A Self-Destructive Obsession

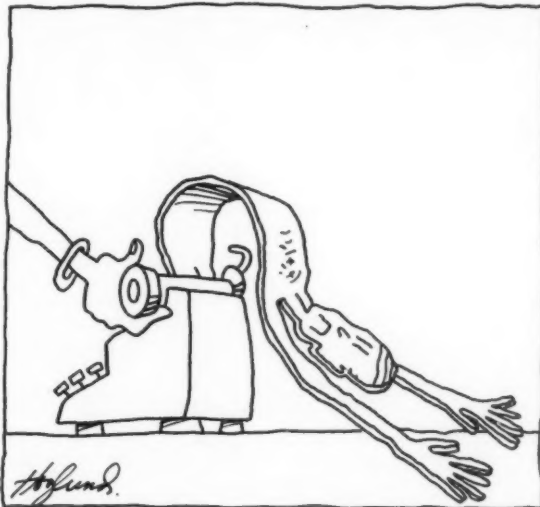
How is a confessional journalist different from a snitch?

BY RON ROSENBAUM

Isn't it obvious by now that the public act most characteristic of the seventies is the Pious Snitch? The Confession, as the people who do it prefer to call it. I'm not talking about gossip. Gossip is about other people, the guilty pleasure of outsiders. Confession is the self-righteous revelation of an insider betraying not only himself but his partners in crime or in bed. For all the newsmagazine cover stories, there's nothing new about gossip these days but quantity. But something different is happening with the confession. It's become the new national obsession.

Look back over the history of the decade so far. Start with Dan Ellsberg (I used to be a war criminal but snitching on these other war criminals will absolve me), and don't forget poor Sid Zion maligned for snitching on Ellsberg because he beat Ellsberg out of his chance to confess first. Then take all leaders of the sixties like Tim Leary and Eldridge Cleaver who now confess they were false prophets — and Jerry Rubin who confessed the Chicago Seven were guilty all along.

Add in all the women suddenly confessing to illicit affairs with past presidents all the way back to FDR. Most recently Dwight D. Eisenhower's wartime chauffeur Kate Summersby not only confessed an affair with Ike, she quoted the Supreme Allied Commander blaming his impotence on poor Mamie. Judith Exner in her confession revealed something far more embarrassing than that about JFK — she claimed he played the soundtrack album of "Camelot" on the White House stereo for her as a preliminary to confessing his undying romantic love. Doris Kearns reports LBJ crawled into her bed, although she claims she crawled out to take notes and nothing untoward happened. Then there is the shameless White House physician who listened to Pat Nixon confess her unhappy sexual relationship with Dick Nixon and promptly snitched to Woodward and Bern-



stein about it.

Count in the confessions of Jimmy Carter (lust in my heart) and Elizabeth Ray (Wayne in my bed). Consider the public fascination for super-snitches Serpico and Deep Throat. Don't forget Watergate penitents Charles Colson (born again) and Jeb Magruder (born yesterday). And of course John Dean, born to be a journalist.

John Dean, journalist. This perfectly appropriate career choice can be perfectly maddening to certain reporters for its symbolic implications about the nature of the profession. The other day I listened to an exceptionally sophisticated Washington journalist rant at the effrontery of Dean — "a snitch, a self-serving snitch" — for taking the name journalist in vain.

We may as well face up to the fact that all journalism, particularly investigative reporting (but not exempting essays such as this one) involves snitching on other people.

But until recently, journalists were content to snitch on strangers. Joan Didion's celebrated warning — never trust a journalist, he'll betray you every time — applied mainly to those situations in which you spend time with people you meet in the course of doing a story, have some drinks, some good times, a meal or two at their home, play with their children, ply them with sympathy until they loosen up enough to confess something worth betraying in print. Up until recently it was only novelists who exercised the freedom to betray lovers, family and close friends with impunity, and then only by changing their names and, usually, some descriptive details.

But now journalists do it without even changing the names, or making the slightest effort to disguise the identity of an unnamed subject. It's called confessional journalism and people get hurt by it, but it's all done in the name of truth. Husbands write about their wives, wives husbands, parents children, brothers sisters. You could look upon it as a replication in the private relationships of media people of the big public snitch — every couple harboring a potential John

Ron Rosenbaum is executive editor of MORE.

Dean taking notes. In any case, confession fever, the itch to snitch, has become a media epidemic, a disease spread by intimate contact—not unlike the case of crabs whose spread from writer to writer Nora Ephron artfully detailed in an *Esquire* story that worked both as a paradigm and a clever satire of the whole genre.

Certain novelists, too, have come under fire recently for works that are not so much invasions of privacy as wholesale expropriations inadequately masked by the fig leaf of a changed name. And some apparently are suffering a backlash. A former wife of a Nobel Prize-winning novelist is reportedly distressed at the treatment "her character" has received in his work. Lois Gould recently complained in the Guest Word column of *The New York Times Book Review* that vulgar Philistines in the media swamp were annoying her with knowing remarks about who the characters in her novel were "in real life."

"I don't do confessional work," says Lois Gould flatly, with the distaste of Chandler's private eye when he says, "I don't do divorce work."

But an increasing number of works of confessional journalism, and novels too, are just that—"divorce work" or "failure of relationships" work, and nobody seems to know what's fair and what isn't, what constitutes betrayal and what's fair game. What follows are stories that explore the netherworld of pain, heartbreak and guilt that are the consequences of this confusion.

All Flesh Is Grist

Back in 1974 Susan Braudy published a satirical fantasy which perfectly defines the difficult questions faced by people who make their living writing about "relationships." She began a fantasized conversation with her tax accountant by telling him she wants to write off all sorts of expenses she incurred in the process of divorcing her husband (among them a bottle of good bourbon to ease the pain), since, after all, she was writing a book about the divorce.

When the accountant objects

she carries the logic a step further and tells him, "I am sometimes in the business of writing about my life, as are many feminist journalists. Thus all the expenses that I incur in the living of my life, and then write about—well, they can be written off." In fact, she tells the accountant, "I've just decided this morning to write a book about my next marriage," and just to make sure she can write the whole thing off she intends to be the one to propose to whatever partner she ultimately chooses.

Were one to take Braudy at face value, this announcement might be a kind warning to any man that might wander into her life that anything he says or does is "on the record" since he's a potential partner and her book is going to be about choosing partners. In fact, he's almost certain to be written on in order to be written off.

The fantasy may have been a jest at the time, but the reality was no joke to her husband. Just a few months after her write-off story appeared, he came back from a vacation and found a copy of the manuscript of her book on their divorce (*Between Marriage and Divorce: A Woman's Diary*) on his doorstep. Along with it was a request from Susan that he sign a release waiving his right to sue for invasion of privacy or libel. The book was a project he had encouraged at the beginning of their separation. But after a first installment appeared as a magazine article he had begun to have doubts; after he read the entire manuscript he called a lawyer. Hurt and angry over matters of fact and interpretation, over what he considered a mean-spirited characterization of his new wife in the book and an overall subcurrent of revenge-seeking, he refused to sign the release until his lawyer had extracted from her lawyer some changes in the manuscript.

Among them: his first name was changed, first to "Seymour," then to the more neutral "Paul." Susan also agreed to a number of detail changes that would disguise somewhat his professional identity. Much of the agreement reflects hard bargaining over seemingly trivial details which nevertheless seem to have been charged with all the emotional tension between them. For

instance: "Author agrees to change the name of their cat to Frank." And "Author agrees to eliminate remarks about a handshake" between her husband and one of her lovers. "In return," the husband "agrees to withdraw his request that that author eliminate her remark about his new wife's ex-husband's passive attitude at parties."

Despite this experiential property settlement, both parties remained hurt and angry in the aftermath of the book. He feels that a distorted image of himself was locked into cold type and frozen for all time. She feels too upset about the unpleasant aftermath to want to speak about it. Two people who might have survived a divorce with some kind of mutual regard after 10 years of marriage no longer speak. Words spoken in anger during a divorce may fade with time, but books written in anger don't. After her book came out he vented his anger by writing an acid parody of it, focusing on her contention that her exposure of their intimate life together was justified by the selfless pursuit of journalistic truth. His title: *All Flesh Is Grist*. He hasn't decided yet whether he wants to publish it.

Dead Baby In A Desk Drawer

It sounded like a great idea at first. Here are these two writers, a man and a woman. They meet, they're attracted to each other. They get to talking about marriages, affairs, "relationships." About why so many go wrong these days. About all the confessional post-mortems being published by men and women about their affairs and what went wrong with them. And about what went wrong with that whole genre—why all those autobiographical novels, non-fiction confessions, novelistic diaries, what have you, inevitably end up sounding self-serving and self-righteous, less than honest and useless as a guide to behavior.

The problem, they decided, was Final Cut, as they say in the picture business. As long as just one of the two people in a relationship is writing about the end of the affair for an audience of millions of strangers and a few

close friends—or even if both parties to an affair are writing about it for separate publishers, a phenomenon increasingly evident as inbreeding among media people increases—the power of that Final Cut is corrupting.

That's when they came up with the idea that sounded so great at first. The two of them decided to have an affair and *then* decided to collaborate on a book about it.

"I can't tell you which came first," he says. "The seductions were both literary and upfront."

The advance was \$10,000. An equal amount would be handed over to them upon delivery of the completed manuscript in 12 months.

One year later, the two of them walked into their publisher's office with a completed 50,000-word manuscript ready for submission. Their editor had their second check all filled out on his desk, ready to hand to them. Just as the exchange was about to be made, the woman spoke up.

No book, she said. She just couldn't go through with it. She would not allow it to be published. Ever.

We'll change the names, we'll disguise your identity, whatever you want, said the editor and co-author. Never in any form, said the woman; nothing will change my mind.

Nothing did. That was a year ago. When I first got word of the story a couple of months ago and called the man involved, he told me the book was dead and he hadn't been able to look at it in the nine months since that awful day. The affair was just as dead, he told me. The woman was living with another man somewhere in the Orient, and he personally was still devastated by the whole experience and could speak about it only in a voice filled with pain.

"Oh God, how did you hear about it? It's very difficult to talk about... A year of my life."

When I agreed to keep his and her name out of the story, he agreed to tell me something about the collaboration and what went wrong. His version anyway.

"In the beginning she was very enthusiastic," he said, "We'd get

together for four or five days and just write and split up and write about it." They'd agreed to do the book in his-and-her-chapters, on each event in their relationship, vowing to hold nothing back about what they felt. There is obviously much potential for hurting and getting hurt in such a situation, particularly if there is an imbalance of feelings on one side or another. No final cut, but the power to cut each other up one chapter at a time right in the middle of the relationship. And hanging over it all was the question apparently unresolved at the beginning of the enterprise: was it a media romance that would end when the deadline was met, or was there something they wanted to preserve for themselves once

the manuscript had been dispatched?

According to him, she began to feel wounded first. "It was a strange adventure neither one of us had bargained for. Gradually she began to realize we were playing with something that was very powerful. I think she sensed it earlier. She began to get very nervous . . . We were rushing a deadline and it began to terrify me."

I asked him what "it" was that terrified him.

"It was the thing itself, the idea of forcing yourself to say everything you think. We were tampering with things we both had doubts about. Eventually toward the end there was a crisis that culminated in an explosion."

Aha, I'll confess I thought to

myself. Here comes the juicy stuff.

"What, ah, led to the explosion exactly?" I asked.

"Look, I feel pretty vulnerable on this," he said. "I can't in any good conscience say I can't answer you, being a writer who's always probing other people myself, but talking about it would be a violation of something I had dealt myself out of. Talking about why would be almost like I'm doing some sort of secondary violation."

I felt it would be cruel to try to extort further intimate details. Instead I asked him why didn't he revive the project by turning it into a novel? Change the names, a few physical details, to veil her identity. That's what everyone

did with their affairs these days.

"People say that, but I couldn't do it. I can't even bear the idea of looking at the manuscript. It's like having a dead baby in my desk drawer."

Dr. Jong Meets Dr. Wing

Erica Jong is pissed off. She can't stand the way people repeatedly make up stories about her which confuse her private life with the fictional life of Isadora Wing, the heroine of *Fear of Flying*.

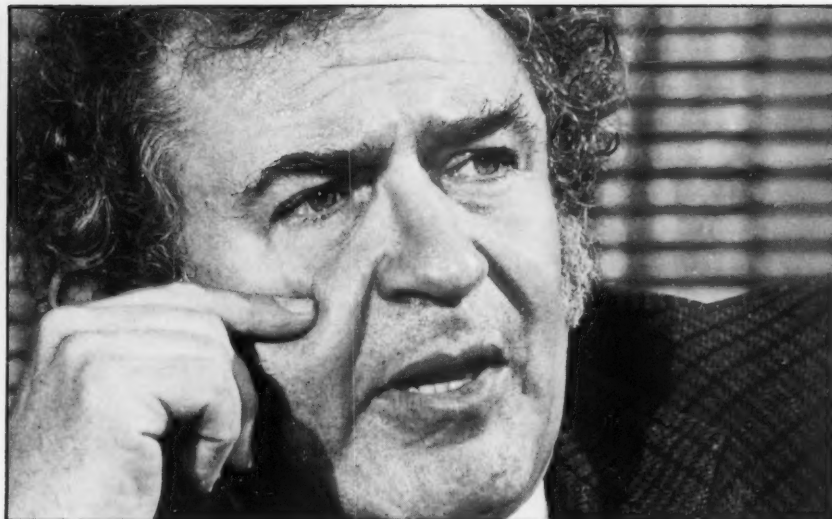
Like the story I was checking with her, for instance. According to what I'd heard, Erica's ex-husband, Dr. Jong, the Oriental child psychiatrist, was raising legal objections to Erica's as yet unpublished new novel, because passages in the novel about Isadora's Oriental child psychiatrist husband Dr. Wing might cause Dr. Jong embarrassment in his profession. (The current standard applied in libel law holds that an individual can win a judgment against a novelist if one of the novelist's characters is "readily identifiable" as the plaintiff and the behavior of that character libels the individual by association.) The story I'd heard went on to say that Erica's plans to continue writing about her husband had contributed to the break-up of her marriage, not long after the publication of *Fear of Flying*.

As I said, this kind of thing pisses her off.

"There are all sorts of vicious rumors that circulate when you become a public person," she told me on the phone. "That lawsuit thing is completely untrue and most likely the product of fears of people who are nervous about writing their own book and are looking for excuses, and are saying 'I could be successful as she but if I did my husband would sue me.' This is more in the area of a psychoanalytic problem for the people who say such things," she says, warning to the subject. "I've heard so much of this—the marriage break-up. Nobody's marriage breaks up because of a book. It's just people saying, 'I could do it, too, and I could be famous like her, only my husband would leave me.'"

Erica Jong: How To Save Your Own Life, sequel to *Fear of Flying*, explores "real life" consequences of writing a confessional novel.





Norman Mailer: In *Advertisements for Myself*, godfather of the modern genre confessed botched attempt to wheedle blurb from Hemingway.

Wide World

In fact, says Erica, her real-life ex-husband has done very well because of *Fear of Flying*. "He read every word of it before it was published. He heartily approved and never said a word against it, not as long as I was married to him. Whatever people say later after a marriage comes to grief is something else, but at the time he was very proud of it, both as my husband and as a psychoanalyst who's with a person who's making a breakthrough. I think he's gained a lot of honor. A lot of people regarded him as a sort of guru. I know when we broke up a lot of people wanted to go out with him, they saw him as the godfather who helped develop my talent. It gave him an awful lot of status which he used and which a lot of women found attractive." (I was unable to confirm with Dr. Jong whether he indeed enjoyed this state of post-marital bliss. He did not return phone messages.)

Erica denied flatly that her ex-husband—she left him about a year after the success of *Fear of Flying*—had taken any legal measures in regard to his portrayal in her second novel, although she conceded the manuscript had been "read and re-read by many, many lawyers."

She returns to the subject of the insensitivity of the public to the distinction between author and

persona in her work. "Take Henry Miller," she says. "He uses his own name, yet he's nothing like the Henry Miller of the book. On a couple of occasions Jonathan [Erica's current lover and companion] and I have grilled him—did he ever really stick the carrot in anybody's vagina, did he ever do some of those outrageous things; and he'd say, 'Oh god no! Everybody makes these things up.' People were always asking Philip Roth stupid questions like 'do your parents speak to you?' People in novels like these become mythic figures. My husband has a place in literary history because of it."

By way of illustrating the purely esthetic anti-biographical thrust of her argument she cites Tolstoy's discovery of a "real" Anna Karenina—a coarse, vulgar woman from a nearby village who happened to get herself run over by a train in Tolstoy's presence. "She was supposed to be ugly, short and squat, a scheming adulteress, but in writing about this chapter Tolstoy fell in love with her, and transformed her," Erica said. "That's what fiction is about."

I was fairly satisfied with this elevated explanation of Erica's literary ambitions until I ran into a woman who had just finished reading the galleys of Erica's sec-

ond novel. This is a sophisticated woman writer who respects Erica's work and is perfectly capable of distinguishing between author and persona, but nevertheless seemed shocked and bemused by what she'd just read.

"Remember the husband, the guy with the hairless balls? Well she was careful about his image in *Fear of Flying*—remember he was always such a good lover, never impotent, all that. Well in this new one she's continuing the story after *Fear of Flying*—only now Isadora is leaving the guy after writing a best-seller and now she says he really wasn't that good at all, she just had to say it because she was still married to him when she wrote the first novel. But now that it's over she can really say how rotten he was in every respect and how great her new lover is—how he's got this great cock and he's more sensitive. But I'll tell you, you know who I think must be in a worse position psychologically than the ex-husband at this very moment?"

"Who?"

"The new lover. Don't you think he must be worrying what happens when it's his turn next? It must put a lot of pressure on him."

Intrigued by this description, I tried to get advance galleys of the

second novel. It wasn't easy. In fact, the publicity people at Erica's publishing house denied any had been sent out. Publication date is not until March, galleys won't go out until January and everything's top secret until then, they told me. When I told them I had spoken to someone who had just been sent galleys, they suggested I "confront" that person and tell whomever it was they must be mistaken or pulling my leg.

Well, come on, publicity people. It took me a day to find a source inside your own conglomerate who provided me with a red-bound copy of *How To Save Your Own Life*, and because you fibbed about it I'm going to break the release date and give away a little of the plot.

How To Save Your Own Life brings us the further adventures of Isadora Wing, some three years after her return, at the close of her *Fear of Flying* fling, to the home of her husband "Bennett Wing," the Oriental child psychiatrist. In the interim we learn Isadora has written a best-selling sexy autobiographical confessional novel (called *Candida Confesses*), and amidst media stardom, lesbian affairs, Hollywood hustlers, an orgy and a serious new male lover, decides the time has finally come to divorce Dr. Wing.

The failures of Dr. Wing as husband and human being are pitilessly detailed—he is "cold and reptilian," pathetically dependent on his own analyst. Worse, she reveals, with enormous outrage for someone who published a book about her own infidelities, he's unfaithful and a hypocrite about it: he failed to confess his affair to her when she confessed her *Fear of Flying* affair to him. He fiendishly allowed her to go ahead and write her novel feeling more guilty than she needed to about her infidelity. She decides she will make up for it in the next novel.

But Dr. Wing's most serious transgression—the one that's at the core of the confessional dilemma the novel tries to explore and the one that hints at a legal struggle or threats of it behind the scenes—is the good doctor's attempt to prevent Isadora from writing about his extra-marital af-

Lily Hou

fair in her next novel. Apparently he threatens to leave her (she hasn't yet decided whether to leave him) if she goes ahead. This inspires Isadora to the following apostrophized address to him:

"Now you have told her [about the affair]—but you have also told her that if she ever writes about *this*, if she ever dares to expose the fact that you have sexual fantasies too, you will surely leave her. It is one thing to demythicize women to expose oneself—but it is quite another to demythicize men to expose one's husband... the most momentous event in my recent life has been declared off-limits to me. Jealousy is what I want to write about. Jealousy is the subject of my new novel. But I have been told I cannot write it. He points out to me frequently that he and I have the same name and that my writing might be an 'embarrassment' to him in his professional career."

Isadora chooses the novel over the marriage and breaks it up herself. It's an affirmation of something like a Heisenberg's Uncertainty principle of autobiographical writing: she can't write about the relationship objectively while she's part of it without changing it fundamentally. It's a kind of objectivity she doesn't bring to bear on her relationship with her new lover, because she's still within it as she writes it and obviously wants to preserve it beyond publication date.

She envelops her new lover with a dreamy, idealizing romanticism in the novel. Flattering as this may be, the new lover is aware of the pitfalls ahead for a character having a relationship with a confessional novelist. At one point "Josh" taunts Isadora by saying he's "looking forward to your next book so I can see how I rated on your scorecard. ... I love you but what the hell good is it going to do me?" he exclaims. "I don't want to wind up in a book..."

That the plaintive cry of her new true love in a moment of greatest vulnerability—"I don't want to wind up in a book"—should, in fact, wind up in the book, is probably the best paradigm of the cannibalistic compulsiveness of the confes-

sional impulse. The irony of that passage is undoubtedly intentional—one of the undeniable achievements of the novel is the way in which it exploits tensions engendered by the flirtation between autobiography and fiction. And it's a brave book (the cowardly attack on the Oriental child psychologist aside). Because for all the talk of Anna Karenina, by putting that watchcry "I don't want to wind up in a book" in a book, she risks the possibility she'll never meet a man, a woman, anyone, who will trust her with any feeling or confidence they can't trust to a book. The practitioners of the confessional literature may ultimately be more victimized by confession fever than the people they write about.

The Decline Of The Male Confession

A feminist with whom I was discussing the confessional question suggested in a challenging way that the majority of the confession stories I was writing about were by women. Part of that can be explained by the increase in the number of women breaking into print. But it did set me to thinking that something had happened to the male confessional.

Take a look at the change in subject matter, first of all. Men used to confess to promiscuity and infidelity, abandoning children. Women do that now. Over the past decade the subject of male confessional has gone from masturbation to homosexuality to impotence, and most recently unrequited lust and even virginity

Wide World



Judith Exner: Set kiss-and-sell style on a presidential level.

(Charles Reich, *Greening of America* author, confessed in his new book that he was a virgin till age 43). A regression from sins of commission to sins of mere omission and finally omission. A landmark in this decline—and probably the single most unappealing confessional vignette in recent literature—was an attempt several years ago by an ambitious writer for *New York* magazine to leap with one article into the footsteps of Podhoretz and Roth by compressing into one unforgettable image the themes of competition, ambition, masturbation, Jewishness and—his own contribution—fat.

He pictures for us a scene from his fat-tormented adolescence in a poor Jewish neighborhood, torment brought on by the competitive drive to make it (the Podhoretz part). He's standing in the bathroom of his parents' tenement trying to masturbate (the Roth part) but finding it tragically difficult to pry his penis out from under the folds of fat that envelop it (his part). It's actually not a bad metaphor for the diminished state of the contemporary confession genre—fruitlessly trying to extract some nugget of justification from within all the blubbing.

Nevertheless there was something genuinely courageous about committing that image to print. There's no way in which it can be found charming on any level. And the desire to charm, the desire to have people read one's confessional and say, "Oh what a devilish rogue and reckless sinner he is," the tendency to turn the so-called confession into a sly boast, is the fatal flaw in almost every male confessional.

The Acid Test

In fact, the Looking Good problem sabotages the integrity of most confessionals, male and female. I can offer a crude but useful acid test for confessional works. If you like the person after you've finished reading his confession, don't trust it; if you feel the person has genuinely embarrassed himself and risked universal contempt, it's a rare and striking confessional achievement. Of course, if you then admire the person for that achievement,



Nora Ephron: Blended fiction and non-fiction in "Crabs."

you're in a Catch-22 situation: if he looks bad it's good, but if it's good he doesn't really look bad, does he? Perhaps the rule is better stated this way: for a confession to succeed on a generic level, the author must risk appearing contemptible on a human level.

Unfortunately, most of what passes for confessional today is contemptible on a generic level, asking not for forgiveness but for approbation. Typical is the glut of "goodbye to all that, hello maturity" genre.

Some middle-class former youth who's spent one summer in Berkeley, or maybe on a commune or in a sublet on the Lower East Side in the sixties will "confess" how naive the romanticism and idealism of his generation or the Movement or the sexual revolution of the sixties was, and how many hard-won, complex truths about life and work and traditional values he's learned, all the while leeching authenticity from a movement he never was part of in order to betray it. Op-ed pages and fortyish editors of monthly magazines have an insatiable appetite for such penitent ass-kissing works by people in their late twenties because it helps reassure them that they really didn't miss out on the sixties by not being young. In the same way, legitimate feminists are being plagued these days by self-proclaimed feminists who confess that the women's movement has failed them, or that they still like romantic love or the Rolling

Stones. Then there's an oily specimen of male who's fond of confessing how he *used* to be just a male chauvinist, real macho, treated women like sex objects, plenty of 'em, too. In most cases this sounds suspiciously like a sneaky excuse to do some old-fashioned sexual boasting. Then there's a whole other species of confession you can spot as fraudulent from the first five words. Those are the ones that begin, "I know it's not fashionable . . ." evoking images of the furies of opposition their confessions will arouse. Rest assured they've calculated that whatever they "confess" to is fashionable with the people they want to impress.

Do any confessional works pass the test? Mailer's *Advertisements for Myself*, godfather of the contemporary genre, in some respects. Not for the Dionysian elements, the sex, drugs, the lust for greatness, but in the mean, petty, careerist things he forces himself to confess to—the humiliation of having to try to wheedle a book jacket blurb for *Deer Park* from his idol/rival Hemingway. That took courage. Writing *Making It* was a courageous thing for Norman Podhoretz to do because not only was he daring to confess to a belief in his own virtue, he was confessing to the least attractive of virtues, those of the straight-A student, a truly reckless act more brave even than his landmark confession of his "Negro problem." Podhoretz paid the full price the rare honest confessional exacts: reviewers heaped contempt on him for totally wrongheaded reasons. Instead of applauding his honesty, they ridiculed the values he was honest about.

The response Podhoretz received was so severe it may have had a chilling effect on the entire genre. Since then people only confess to groovy sins, and exceptions are rare. Jill Johnston for a time made some breakthroughs, Mailer when not fatally undermined by his desire to charm, the now notorious Barney Collier whose horrible yet brilliant book *Hope and Fear in Washington* is the confession of a self-hating journalist doing to the top journalists in the Washington press corps all the rotten, cruel, distort-



Jill Johnston: Turned her private life into an unsparing public column. Bettye Lane

ing and hurtful things journalists do to people.

Fortunately I have a solution that will reverse the decline in the male confessional genre. It's very simple. All those men who are now being written about by women should start taking notes. Write about what it's like being written about and what the other side of the story is. Wouldn't almost everyone who read *Fear of Flying* love to read *The Confessions of Erica Jong's Husband*? Maybe that's why she's so careful with her new lover: he's a writer, too. There's already one fairly trashy precedent, *My Life with Xavier*, by Larry "The Silver Fox," one of her lovers. Women diarists have always provided a corrective down-to-earth view of famous male authors. There are fascinating stories waiting to be written from the inside about what happens to the dynamics of a relationship that is confessionalized. The two tales of confession fever that follow suggest the possibilities, both funny and sad, of the counter-confession.

A Media Soap Opera For Those In The Know

They were a media couple, both young writers with lots of media friends. Then things started to go awry between them and she began to write about it. In fact it's not too much of an exaggeration to say she pyramided an entire career as essayist and journalist upon the ruins of their relationship. First a big article on sexual jealousy which made much use of melodramatic fights between them, including what she described as a sleeping pill suicide threat on her part. The article—described the unhappy consequence of attempting to carry on an "open" relationship—and confessed her belief in the legitimate old-fashioned jealousy as against the "fashionable" new theories that it was regressive. The saleability of this demonstration of the New Maturity was quickly evident. It was just the attitude a magazine for young

ladies wanted for its Sex Advice column, and soon leftover anecdotes from *The Big Relationship* were warmed over to pep up the advice. In one article she recounted a seduction attempt (repulsed, naturally) by a mutual friend who may not have been aware he was making his play on a public stage. And there she is again in the pages of *Harper's* Wraparound "reeling" through the streets of lower Manhattan confessing to a friend that the on-again off-again relationship had suffered another relapse.

She never used his name, of course, but since so many media people knew them both she was in a sense conducting the relationship like a private soap opera for those in the know.

Someone once asked him what would happen to her literary career if they ever finally broke up for good: what would she have to write about? "That's when I start writing about her," he's reported to have said with a laugh.

The other day I asked him if he'd be interested in writing about what it's like being written about (they seemed to have broken up for good).

"I don't know," he said. "The thought has crossed my mind. The funny thing, looking back on it, is that she asked me to help edit that first story and I did."

"You helped edit it?"

"Maybe it was naive of me," he says with a kind of amused detachment. "Maybe she just wanted me to be part of the process so she wouldn't feel guilty or I wouldn't feel betrayed. I guess I didn't know what I was letting myself in for."

Does he feel betrayed?

"No, not really. I feel sort of flattered in some ways. And now that the relationship is over, I can read about it with a kind of detached interest in each story, since it's no longer interpretable as a weapon or a maneuver in the relationship between her and me." He confesses he did consent to the use of some dramatic license in the original story. He wasn't really sure there were enough pills around to make for a serious suicide attempt, for instance. However, he doesn't think it's worth bothering to write his side of the story because by now the

relationship has been over for some time, he's attained a certain distance from the whole thing and she hasn't made use of its increasingly ancient history in any of her more recent essays.

Just one week later, though, there she was back in print with a big essay on women and loneliness. And there he was in the opening section—or there *they* were together again, breaking apart, a trauma which, she writes, set her on the long road to the discovery of the values and perils of living alone.

I called him. "Have you seen it? She's struck again."

"Oh, no, what is it this time?"

"It's an essay about how difficult it is adjusting to being alone after the big break-up with you."

"That's weird," he said.

"She's had a very strong relationship with this one guy for eight months now."

"Maybe the piece has been on overset for a while," I suggest.

"Could be. Well, how much is there about me in it?"

"Just a few paragraphs about the agonizing break-up in the beginning. There is another suicide attempt at the end, though. Well, it's not actually a suicide attempt, it's a near drowning. She's talking about how she became so happy being alone she began to carry it to extremes—spending days all by herself in some beach house, going swimming alone. And how one day she goes out into the ocean too far and—it gets

very metaphorical here—feels herself drawn into the lonely darkness of the ocean floor and nearly going under until a couple happens by and rescues her."

"Oh, I remember that one," he says. "I was out there with her that day."

"You were? Because she says she stumbles back into the empty beach house after her rescue groping desperately for some connection back to life, touching the furniture for contact."

"Well that's true," he says, "only there was a person sitting on the furniture."

The Fall Of The Father Confessor

You could call him the Father Confessor. There are those who credit—or blame—him for engendering a whole species of early-seventies sexual confessionals. And then at the peak of his career, a couple of things started to backfire on him.

It started innocently enough. At 40, the man had risen to an editorial position of some power at a certain periodical about the same time his marriage was breaking up and he was deep into psychoanalysis.

Naturally enough, many of his talks with the women writers who frequented his office would turn to such subjects of common interest as "relationships," feminism, psychoanalysis, jealousy. He was an extremely in-

telligent and sympathetic listener, gently paternal in manner but not condescending, quick to share confidences about his own personal life, confessions of pain and bewilderment and vulnerability. Women responded by opening to him their secret feelings about their own relationships. He had a comfortable way with feminist catchwords and concerns which gave him an ability to ask what otherwise might seem like intrusive questions about sexuality with dignity. All day long he would ply women with confessions and they would reply with theirs. From many of these sessions of oral confessional intercourse, articles were conceived, nurtured and brought to term. Some of the most celebrated confessionals of a confession-filled season.

Enter the American Express card. The publication gave him a company card; expense account lunches began to supplant the austere office conferences. Dinners followed. The atmosphere and the wine encouraged thoughts of more than confession-swapping intimacy. Fantasies were more accessible. And of course in the spirit of frankness previously established, they were talked about. Occasionally they were acted upon. But not as often, it turned out, as some were led to believe. Meanwhile the cross-pollination of confessions went forward at an even more fevered pace as he buzzed from one frank and intimate conversation to another, often sweetening the next with some provocative material from the last, spicing that with one from the day before and voilà: a "trend in relationships" is discovered and a confessional article is commissioned.

But then; trouble: the poem in *Screw*. One of the women whose poetry he had been printing broke off her relationship with him and published a poem about it in *Screw* which readily identified him in obscene and comic fashion.

Well, people began to talk. Questions were raised about other women whose work he'd published, and, often quite unfairly, the phrase "casting couch" was brought to bear. In the midst of all this, a woman reporter began investigating his private life, asking

people all around him, including the women themselves. A few confessed to entertaining fantasy-talk about affairs with him, but nothing more.

Now it happened that the woman doing the investigating was in a good position to know about this sort of thing, since she herself had been the subject of his fantasies. She even told some people she interviewed about the father-confessor's fantasies about her and described the letters he would write her envisioning romantic liaisons.

For his part, the father confessor decided he'd handle the situation by confessing even more. He'd already confessed a lot to that woman reporter about his marriage (what he didn't know was that she'd managed to have a long talk with his wife, who confessed even more), so he might as well confess the whole truth to her about his affairs; they'd been much fewer and far between than anyone suspected, for some embarrassing reasons which he also confessed to her. For some reason, he believed that if he entrusted her with this sort of intimate confession she'd have to be fair to him, put it all in perspective.

She wasn't and she didn't. She took the tangled threads of confessions, twined them together and hung him with it. The only thing she left out was the part she played in his life. Even his critics were appalled, although it might be said that confessional karma had caught up with him.

In the shocked aftermath of this betrayal, the career of the father confessor underwent a curious change. He ceased generating confessional stories by others and began to write a few himself. The usual things: feminism, psychoanalysis, "relationships," all written from a carefully sensitive, heavily psychoanalyzed male point of view. It's possible to think, of this development: how pathetic; the poor guy never learned a lesson from the quicksand of confessionals he created last time. But there's another interpretation: he may be building up to writing about that woman. He has a lot to say. It's one confessional I'm looking forward to.



Norman Podhoretz: Since hostile reception to *Making It*, few confessionals risk confessing to any but "groovy" sins.

The Surgeon General Solution

When I first set out to explore the confessional morass I thought it might come down to a question of manners. If a confessional etiquette that made sense could be agreed on, fewer people would be left feeling betrayed by writers and fewer writers would have to feel they're engaged in something sneaky, snitchy. There would be rules, and people would know when they're broken. An etiquette of "fair warning," for instance, that would answer the question: at what point in a relationship does a writer about relationships let the person with whom he or she is relating know that their mutual experiences may end up in a book or a magazine

piece? First date? First base? First anniversary? First draft?

One problem with this is that often people who end up most hurt by confessionals are those who are not taken by surprise. Indeed, they're complicitous, encouraging, editing, confessing more and still more, thinking they're engaged in a common truth-seeking enterprise. Until final cut and they discover it's not *their* book, it's *his* book or *her* book, and it's too late.

The other objection to an etiquette is that writers believe that bad manners are a sign of good art, and if they've got something juicy they'll find all sorts of artistic and philosophic justification for sweeping aside convention to allow their genius to spill unchecked onto the page.

Giving up on an etiquette, much less a morality, I began to wonder if there wasn't yet something feverishly pernicious about the whole confessional genre, that like some breeder reactor overtopping critical mass it was creating self-destructive chain reactions all over the place and desperately needed a cooling-off period. I toyed with the idea, a modest proposal, of suggesting a one-year moratorium. For 12 months writers would forego writing about their "relationships"—and themselves—and try learning to write about, dare I suggest it, other people. A year of off-the-record relationships might mean a chance to discover the simple pleasures of living an emotional life for its own sake rather than for the quality of the "mate-

rial" it supplies.

Well I backed off that idea fast. I'll confess, when I realized I couldn't trust myself to hold to that standard. No writers are trustworthy. And that's when I came up with what I'll call the Surgeon General Solution. Don't ban writers because they're dangerous; instead, protect the innocent public by making them bear warnings, sewn into their clothes or tattooed on the palms of the hand. I think the wording dictated by the Supreme Court in its *Miranda* ruling against confessions obtained without warning from suspects would serve. You remember it:

You have the right to remain silent.
Anything you say may be held against you. ■

KISS AND TELL IT TO THE QUEEN OF GHOSTS

Xaviera, Fanne Fox, Liz Ray Confide in Yvonne Dunleavy

Now Yvonne's telling some of her secrets.

BY JAY MOLISHEVER

Yvonne Dunleavy has a little something in the bank. The tapes. The ones with the real names of the congressmen Liz Ray slept with, the names she teasingly veiled in her novel.

The book was a lightly fictionalized account of Elizabeth's life as a taxpayer-paid sexual appliance for the most powerful men in Washington. Elizabeth eventually gave those men an object lesson in the inadvertent power of a woman who knows names by retiring Wayne Hays to his farm. Those men breathed a sigh of relief when the book came out and they saw it named no names. But the tapes do.

Yvonne has those tapes. And she also has the tapes she did with

Xaviera Hollander. And with Fanne Foxe.

Yvonne says she has no desire or intention to reveal the secrets Elizabeth's tapes contain, the real identity of the mysterious

"Senator Player" for instance. These are, you see, Elizabeth's secrets, not hers. She is merely the transmitter of the story. But now she is talking into a tape recorder herself, on a quiet afternoon several months after the publication of the book, telling how she became the repository of all those secrets.

"A very mysterious phone call," Yvonne recalls, speaking with a clipped accent from behind her tinted glasses. "She told me her name, that she worked in Washington, and that I would be interested in hearing her story. I really didn't feel too comfortable about it. That's not the way you usually approach each other. It was kind of cloak and dagger. She wanted to meet me somewhere.

Very secretive."

Why did Elizabeth Ray pick Yvonne Dunleavy to reveal herself to, you may be asking? Well, it seems she had seen her name listed as co-author, along with Robin Moore and Xaviera Hollander, on *The Happy Hooker*, a book that enjoyed phenomenal success and made a not too small fortune for all three of them several years before.

And how had Yvonne gotten mixed up with that gold mine? She had been at the New York Public Library doing some research on prostitution. "I noticed that there was a sort of strange cyclical trend of interest in this country about prostitution. Books would be published about every 10 years, since the turn of the cen-



Jay Molishever is a freelance writer living in New York.

Xaviera Hollander (left), Liz Ray and Fanne Fox shared a ghost.

Wide World

tury, and there hadn't been anything done for about 10 years. So I had an intuition that it would be a good thing to do."

Upon arriving in New York in 1967, Yvonne was unable to find work, despite newspaper experience in Hong Kong and in her native Australia. She turned to freelancing. At a party, she met Robin Moore. He had taped an interview with an Upper East Side madam named Xaviera Hollander and written a five-page piece about her in the third person, but didn't know quite how he wanted to proceed with it. He showed it to Yvonne, who suggested that it might be much more interesting if written in the first person. He asked her if she'd like to work on it with him, and she jumped at the chance. "Robin quite often works with co-authors," Yvonne explains. "You'll see many of his books marked 'written by Robin Moore and so-and-so.' He used to say that if the book were a movie, it would be Xaviera the star, me the writer and him the producer. He wrote the last chapter and some additional material in the first chapter."

Through a bit of fortunate timing—for her book at least—Xaviera's place was busted just as the book was being completed, making her headline material. The Knapp Commission hearings into New York City police corruption also kept her in the headlines. Dell pushed the manuscript through production and the book took off like a shot.

Yvonne had chosen well. For about four months' hard work the formerly unemployed journalist was now a one-third partner in the hundred-thousand-dollar advance and royalties of a book that went on to become the best-selling paperback original of all time, with over seven million copies in print by the time of its 34th printing in July 1976.

During the next few years, Yvonne went through a small identity crisis, brought on, in part, by her success. "It had never been my desire to get rich," she said. "I'm a journalist really. At the time I was a nice, pure, unspoiled reporter. I just wanted the satisfaction of working." She edited a magazine, *Coronet*, for a

few years, then began working on a novel, a romance set against the fall of Shanghai in 1947.

Then, one summer night in late 1974, Annabel "Fanne Foxe" Battistella took the dive into the Potomac River Tidal Basin which splashed her name, along with Wilbur Mills', across the nations' front pages. As the scandal mounted in the ensuing months, it became apparent that Fanne was another kiss-and-tell gold mine. But Fanne and her manager found difficulty in getting a suitable deal until Pinnacle Books agreed to publish Fanne's autobiography on the condition that Yvonne would be the ghost. Pinnacle made her "an offer I couldn't refuse," and set a deadline one month away.

"To write something of 60,000 words you should really understand the person, the individual, especially if you're going to paraphrase them," Yvonne said.

"Within the month I had to not only meet her, record her, get it transcribed, but write a book, and it's almost a physical impossibility. I don't like to work that way. You sacrifice quality doing something that fast. Some writers feel that only with that kind of psychological pressure can they encourage themselves to perform. But there are all kinds of incentives to perform. Money," she said very seriously. "is a great incentive to perform."

In the midst of all this Elizabeth Ray called. "She told me that she had to see me. I was not very enthusiastic, because I didn't want to do any more of those co-authorships really. It would just be putting the novel aside one more time.

"But when I met her she became rather intriguing to me. There's one thing that they talk about in the industry—it's the mercantile aspect of the

industry—is somebody promotable? Physically, she looked very promotable.

"And also, Washington was a focal point of interest then. The things she told me weren't as damning as Watergate, they were more light-hearted. I was piqued by the story that she told me—she felt she'd been used and everything—but I thought of the bouncy-blonde-on-the-Hill kind of aspect of it. I mean it could be a kind of nice welcome relief from the demolition job that Watergate had done on the Capitol. It would disclose a kind of truth—heavily-disguised—in a 'we're all human' kind of context.

"Everyone would be heavily disguised. That was Elizabeth's original intention. She felt she didn't want to tread on any toes."

Yvonne decided to spend a weekend with Elizabeth, after she had finished her work on the Fanne Foxe book, and to prepare

Encounter austria

I put myself on Sigmund's couch

Here in the Sigmund Freud Museum at Vienna's Berggasse 19, I dreamed I met the great Doctor himself. What would he say about the mystery I felt in that room?

Elsewhere, in houses on streets I can't name, I heard echoes of Beethoven, Mozart, Schubert, Haydn. I visited the many museums and monuments reflecting the past that brought me here to Austria. I saw the

Lipizzaner stallions of the Spanish Riding School, sailed the Danube, walked through the Vienna Woods.

In the mountains near Innsbruck I relived the breathtaking races of the Winter Olympics. I listened to the sound of music in the hills of Salzburg. And I was changed.

It's easy for you, too, to put yourself on Sigmund's couch... to encounter Austria.



I would like to Encounter Austria.

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an outline to send around to see if there was any interest.

There was a lot of interest. She received a contract from Dell, the same paperback house that had published *The Happy Hooker*. Work began in the early summer.

"I went out to the West Coast to interview her," Yvonne said. "She had moved out to Hollywood for a few months. Interviewing Elizabeth was the most exhausting experience I've ever had. She had a terrible thing about secrecy. I had to sleep and shower with her. She wouldn't let me out of her sight."

"If someone rang her front doorbell, she'd push the tapes and every little scrap of evidence out of sight. She'd whisper. We could be out in a field somewhere and she'd be whispering into the tape. And then a plane would go over and drown it out."

"And she'd pull back on what she wanted to say. She'd often have second thoughts, because she'd become alternately timid and determined. At one point I finally had to say, 'Elizabeth, I just don't know how we are going to complete this.'"

Unlike *The Happy Hooker*, which told the story of Xaviera's dealings with unknown people, and unlike the Fanne Foxe book, which recounted Fanne's well-reported and well-documented affair with Wilbur Mills, *The Washington Fringe Benefit* was to be about some previously undisclosed public figures, who, though heavily disguised, would not be totally anonymous to the readers. Yvonne says she felt a need to satisfy herself that the story she was fictionalizing was, to some degree, based on fact.

"I went to Washington with her and she disguised me. She gave me some sort of anonymous name. In fact, one legislator, she recently told him who I was and he said, 'You know, I always thought she was the most intriguing of all your girlfriends, but I'd still like you to fix me up with her.'"

"I did check it out as best I could. I did go to the office where she was working, of Wayne Hays. I couldn't sort of hide under the bed or anything—I would have to take her word for that, but there was no doubt in my mind

that she was honest."

Once her research was completed, Yvonne began writing steadily and methodically. She had by now had plenty of experience, from her two previous projects, in quickly transforming dozens of hours of tapes into a readable, cohesive book. First, she took the voluminous transcripts ("done by a secretary I know and trust") and organized them on the floor of her office, according to the outline she had written from notes taken during the interviews. Additional interviews were done if she found any gaps as she went along.

The book was nailed down, changes made, and delivered to Dell in January 1976. Yvonne went off to Hong Kong for three months to do some research for her novel, expecting a September release date for Elizabeth's book.

"To me it was a completed project. I thought it would make a nice little type of summer reading book," she said.

Then the bombshell. Yvonne was back in New York when a friend called her one Sunday in May to tell her of the Rudy Maxa and Marion Clark story in *The Washington Post* detailing how Congressman Wayne Hays had kept Elizabeth in a \$14,000-a-year taxpayer-paid staff position solely for the purpose of having sex with him. Once again, one of Yvonne's literary projects had been blessed with the oh-so-marketable taint of scandal.

Yvonne said she was completely surprised. "The day that the story broke in *The Washington Post*, Elizabeth didn't even tell me about it. She is capable of being super, super secretive. I mean, I am the person to whom she has poured out the deepest, most innermost secrets of her life."

At the time there was speculation that the story in the *Post* was a well coordinated publicity grab engineered by Dell to flack the book. Yvonne denied this, saying Dell was just as surprised as she was.

According to Rudy Maxa, Elizabeth contacted him and Marion Clark on her own. She was greatly upset. She had just been barred by Hays from attending the reception he was holding for his

fiancée, Pat Peak, a former employee. She was afraid for her physical safety and thought telling her story to the press would insure her.

Maxa is convinced that there was no conspiracy to use the *Post* story to help sales of the book. "Her coming to us was motivated by her physical fear," he told me. "Towards the end of our research [in May] Elizabeth was saying 'maybe you guys could not run the story until August, and then it would really help the sales of my book. I had to give her a fundamental lecture on journalism, that we weren't there to help the book—necessarily. If there was a conspiracy, Liz would not have been saying things like that to us. She would have kept her trap shut. There was no shrewd PR man behind this.'"

Dell decided a few days later to publish the book immediately, rather than wait for the original release date. "I did not see that manuscript from the time I handed it in in January until about a week after the story was in the *Post*, Yvonne said, "which was when they decided to publish it. In about two days. They didn't even do galley. They went straight to page proofs."

In the unexpected firestorm of publicity, Dell put a big rush on, but they had also decided to make some changes, both large and small, to further protect them from any liability. Minor things like changing the pseudonym of the Wayne Hays-like character from Jeremiah Penny to Otis Battle. Major things like dropping a whole chapter on the other girls on the Hill. Yvonne was given the galley "to look over," but with no time to make corrections.

"The changes, I felt, weren't what I would have done," she said. "I really preferred my version, and so I decided to leave my name off. That's not to denigrate the book as it is, it's still Elizabeth's story and a cheery little tale. I just felt it didn't represent the manuscript I had turned in."

The growing scandal in Washington that made the book's publication an event came as a shock to Yvonne. "Everybody was calling. Everybody wanted the ins and outs, the inside story.

People had actually tracked me to my house, which made me a little paranoid... I'd get 10, maybe 20 newspaper telephone calls a day... and I just completely... well, I wasn't available. I just went down to the library, or I just let them sit there. I had a really very tense period."

"Here I was suddenly three times in a row involved with notorious individuals, well, involved in headlines. It wasn't my intention. I just wanted a nice peaceable, profitable life, and rewarding, professionally rewarding, personally rewarding."

"I had thought this certainly would not be a damaging book, or even a controversial book. It could be provocative. Elizabeth also had thought that those few who did recognize themselves in it would have a little chuckle and maybe a little wink in the locker room, and she would earn enough money to go back to Hollywood, satisfying her need to write a book about her life. I do have to say that if somebody was interested enough to dig out where she actually worked then something might have developed from that. Based on my knowledge of journalism, I didn't think the book would have made that explosion. That was my educated and calculated guess."

Yvonne's assessment may sound slightly disingenuous if you've got a cynical turn of mind, considering that the magnitude of the book's sales are, at least partially, due to the size of the scandal. But who could have known a year and a half ago that the collective response of the American people and the American Congress to the revelations that one of the most powerful men in the House was screwing one of his more shapely minions would be anything other than "so what?"

And what about Yvonne? What's next for the Queen of the Ghosts, I asked. "Well, I'm still working on my novel," she replied, "but I was just putting some other material together this week to write a proposal on a book about what writing all these books has been like."

A book about what it's like being a kiss-and-tell ghost? "Yes and you know what I find I need, to dredge it all out? A ghost-writer."

CONFESSION MAGS FACE UP TO SEX REVOLUTION

Feminism, Masters and Johnson, Wheelchair Sex New Themes

"I Cured Their Impotence."

BY NONA CLELAND

Just what is that nipple doing there on the cover of *Secrets* magazine? The people at *Secrets* were a little taken aback when the presence of the erect pink nipple poking out from the otherwise demure Victorian costume of their cover model was pointed out to them.

"I thought it was a rose-colored clasp on her pearls," said editor-in-chief Florence J. Moriarty. "We thought it was a button on her dress," said editor Jean Sharbel.

Confession magazines like *Secrets*—one of the many "true-story" titles put out by the MacFadden Group, the oldest, largest and most puritanical publisher of the true-story genre—have long featured titillating titles on their covers ("RAPED ON MY HONEYMOON!"), but have filled the stories so titled with guilt and shame and puritanic preaching about the wages of sin. And they never went so far as to allow actual nudity on their covers. No wonder they seemed so disturbed when I pointed out the nipple.

"That cyclops nipple, it's in such a peculiar place!" said Moriarty, who clearly held the tiny bud of flesh personally at fault for finding its way onto the cover of one of her magazines.

"We don't want any publicity on that," emphasized Sharbel.

"I'm sure our readers wouldn't want to see that kind of thing on our magazines. Fortunately, they don't seem to have noticed. We didn't notice it ourselves 'til one of the vice presidents said, 'Gee, isn't that...'" She couldn't bring

herself to finish.

"We were just so taken with the beauty of the shot—we were not vigilant," Mrs. Moriarty concluded, chagrined.

But was it a lack of vigilance or did the presence of the nipple reflect subconscious desire to create a racier image for the 50-year-old true-story genre? Once called "the pious pornographers," the confession magazine people have long offered unfulfilling titillation to their largely working class

female audience. Now they find themselves losing readers to the explicit and unashamed eroticism of *Viva*, *Playgirl* and *Cosmopolitan*. The confession magazines are facing an identity crisis.

The shift in the sexual climate ("Many people today are very openly having babies out of—pardon the expression—wedlock," as veteran confession story author Dorothy Collett puts it), the feminist movement and the increasing sophistication of TV-exposed readers have probably all contributed to the declining circulations of romance magazines. *True Story*, the biggest seller in the field, has dropped from 2.5 million copies in 1970 to 1.7 million today. One major confession house, Dauntless Books, recently folded. Some of the approximately 30 magazines remaining in the field have gone into direct competition with the racier slicks and print lurid tales of foot fetishism, S-M triangles and barnyard love affairs. Other houses, such as MacFadden, be-

lieve that the loyal core of their audience clings to a Bible Belt morality. Their readers may want to be tantalized, but they don't want to read about, say, donkeys.

Despite the magazines' troubles, each month eight to 10 million blue-collar wives still turn to magazines with names like *True Confessions* and *Real Love Stories*. According to market surveys, most of these women read nothing else—not even a daily newspaper.

Women who would be embarrassed by *Playgirl* and overwhelmed by *Ms.* find in the confessions an acceptable level of soft-core turn-on and safe-to-try-at-home feminism. And they find something else the women's slicks generally do not offer—housewife heroines, reinforcement for family-centered values and the pleasant conviction that someone else is worse off than they are.

The confession fan not only reads, she believes. Confession editors get letters that express a reader's profound relief that Jo Ellen decided against an abortion and sympathy cards for Walter, whose father was killed in a factory accident. ("I'm glad Mrs. Wilson was the one assigned to Tommy's case. Even though she had so much patience, I was truly surprised when she took him into her own home with her own children. Just think—it was poor little retarded Danny who accomplished the miracle!" Ms. M.J. recently wrote to *True Romance*.)

"Fiction is a dirty word around these magazines," says Florence Moriarty. Although she concedes that at least half her stories come from professional writers, she demurely insists they are all "based on fact."

That's at least close to the way Bernarr MacFadden, father of the confession magazine and founder of Cosmotarianism, The Happiness Religion, would have wanted it. MacFadden, a physical fitness proselytizer trying to teach America the value of exercise, sunshine, fresh air and clean thoughts through his magazine *Physical Culture*, was troubled by the number of letters pouring in describing problems that wouldn't succumb to a brisk hike through the woods. In 1919, Mac-

Haunting! MY LITTLE BOY'S EYES BEG FOR A FATHER

SECRETS

What's a guy to do?
MY WIFE SEDUCES ME EVERY NIGHT
...So she can win \$10,000!


"I'LL NEVER, NEVER LEAVE YOU, MAMA..."
My long-ago promise is destroying my family

A stunning suspense story:
A WINDOW FILLED WITH GERANIUMS
It let in love...and terror!

I EASED AN OLD MAN'S LONELINESS
Now he calls me a thief!

HE PLAYED US ONE AGAINST THE OTHER
Our office love triangle was different all right!

My husband's parting words still ring in my ears:
"I HAVE TO HAVE MORE THAN YOU CAN GIVE ME"



Nona Cleland is a freelance writer living in New York.

The tell-tale nipple: *Secrets* editors claim it doesn't mean a change in attitude at the very prim confessions magazines.

Fadden brought out the first issue of *True Story* with the following invitation to readers:

How often do we hear, "if only I could write my life story." Here is your chance to write *your* life story... We believe that "truth is stranger than fiction." We believe that LIFE STORIES founded on fact and written from the heartfelt experiences of those who have suffered and enjoyed, failed and succeeded, will be of deep and profound interest to the reading public... Don't send us anything dry or commonplace. We want life experiences. We want to serve LIFE as it is—red-hot from the pens of those who have felt its sorrows and joys.



That first issue also contained the tale that was to stereotype the confessions ever after. The introductory box read:

It is not an everyday matter for a refined and well-bred girl to bare the innermost secrets of her heart and tell the causes of her undoing. This story from life has been written because the woman in the case, who has concealed nothing but her identity—and not even that in her original manuscript—hopes to guard other girls from a like fate.

"At the age of 24, I look back with tear-dimmed eyes upon a wrecked life," the sad story began. "At school I was taught physiology, but the most important parts of my anatomical structure were never mentioned. Of those important functions that so powerfully affected the emotions

and instincts, I was entirely ignorant. I associated freely with boys and was allowed a little more freedom than may be wise under such circumstances."

The narrator became engaged to a young-man-about-town, and they shared a private moment: "His kisses intoxicated me. Everything seemed to slip away and a strong rush of emotion figuratively swept me off my feet. In a dim way I realized my conduct had been inexcusable, but he tried to reassure me, stating that engaged couples usually make similar mistakes. As you can well imagine, disaster soon came upon me," she lamented.

It's quite a leap from the refined and well-bred girl betrayed by her anatomical ignorance to Hilda, the heroine of "I Hyponotize Men—'Fondle Me Here... Tickle Me There!—I Cured Them of Impotence," a story in the September 1976 issue of *Real Love Stories*. Hilda is downright proud of her profession—a whore with a social conscience. She only accepts men who are impotent as customers, helps them overcome their problem and sends them on their way reinvigorated.

When Hilda changes, it's not because she feels guilty, but because she finds her life too other-directed. What she decides she wants for herself is what most confession readers already have—a home, a husband and kids.

"Our heroines sometimes sin, never repent and have a darn good time," says Florence Moriarty, dismissing the sin-suffer-repent formula long associated with the confessions. "I never did go in for stories with a lot of wailing and breast-beating."

What the confession magazines decidedly *do* go in for are the unquestionable values of family life and family love. To want a husband, a home of her own and children is the highest aspiration most confession readers have ever held.

The woman who devotes her life to a career does not exist in confessionland. To the working class wife, a career is simply not an option. A job—perhaps. (The current romance magazine dream job is working in a plant store.)

And the woman who doesn't want children—at least eventually—is considered pathological. If she's the subject of a story, something will always happen to bring her around—something like "Those Nine Terrible Hours I Thought I Was a Widow" (August, *True Story*).

Searching for her husband in the midst of a tornado's devastation, Marsha (who has been taking a lot of guff from her spouse and mother-in-law because she doesn't want children after three whole years of marriage) finds herself tending two recent orphans. "With a throb of feeling, I realized that this was one value of having children," she declares. "They cause you to direct yourself outward in time of trouble rather than in upon the misery." When Marsha finally finds her husband in a hospital, in traction and bandaged from forehead to toe, she tells him she wants to adopt her two orphans of the storm. He readily agrees but asks, "Of course, we'll have some of our own, too?" "Of course," she replies.

Feminism has found a small foothold in the confessions, and last summer several editors from the field sipped lemonade at President Ford's White House tea for magazine staffers who took part in the Equal Rights Amendment write-in.

Feminism has found its way into the stories, too. People like Joanie, narrator of "Five Years Without a Climax—I Can't Go On This Way" (August, *Modern Love Confessions*) are demanding more from life than their mothers got: "Mom's voice sounded dead and dry. 'All those years, waiting



on everybody hand and foot. And now I'm all alone with nothing to show for it. It'll be different for you, Joanie. You young people know how to have a good time—even in the bedroom."

But Joanie doesn't know, and she realizes she's headed down that same bitter road her mother followed. Her husband slugs her when she tells him she hasn't enjoyed sex during their five-year marriage, but Joanie's honesty has brought a solution into the realm of possibility. They stay together, and eventually she is "fulfilled—for the first time! I felt like I wanted to feel on my honeymoon, like a complete woman, crazy about her new husband." She feels so good about herself that she decides to take on the new challenge of a job. "It felt so good to be doing something besides keeping house," she reports.

Actually, feminist ideas have been reaching the working-class woman through confession magazines for some time. "Women's Lib Came Between Us," which appeared in *Secrets* six years ago, was a male-narrated story in which the hero had to abandon his male chauvinist piggy ideas in order to win a liberated woman. And "Virgin in a Hurry—In a Hurry to Lose My Virtue," another six-year-old *Secrets* tale, was in reality the story of a young woman who revolts against male domination—and wins.

Titles are purposefully titillating, of course, and more than occasionally have little to do with the story. "Sleep With Me Alone or Not at All" (August, *True*

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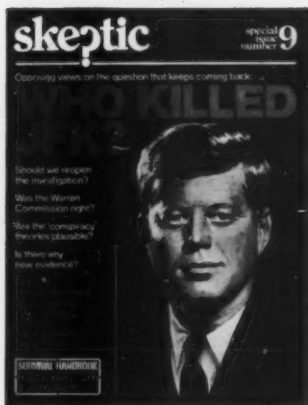
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of *Skeptic Magazine*!

Since Oswald was *known* to be right-handed, how come his gun had a left-handed scope? Why does an FBI report claim that *separate* shots hit the President and ex-Governor Connally . . . when the Warren Commission *insists* it was a single bullet? And how do you account for the 17 different witnesses—all with evidence contrary to the Warren Commission's conclusions—who were found *dead or murdered* within three years of that sad traumatic day in Dallas?

Disturbing . . . more than that, agonizing . . . questions that linger to puzzle and plague us still, in 1976. Was the Warren Commission right . . . or are we all victims of the most massive and frightening cover-up in the history of our republic?

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Confessions) sounds racy. But the unwanted third in bed turns out to be a dog.

Light stories frequently appear in the confessions, and the mother-in-law story is as much a staple as the mother-in-law joke on the Borscht Belt. Another frequent sighting is the familiar old plot dressed up with some current fad or event.

"The Lonely Spy Who Changed My Life" (July, *True Romance*) is the tale of a bored housewife who fantasizes a glamorous life in espionage—until she meets a real CIA operative whose health, home and psyche have been wrecked by a most unfortunate assignment: the assassination of a man later proved to have been loyal, not traitorous.

A standard boy-meets-girl, boy-saves-girl, boy-gets-girl saga, "A Window Filled With Geraniums: It Let in Love and Terror" (July, *Secrets*), adds only a trendy twist to the old formula—the hero is tipped to his damsel's distress by a galvanometer attached to a flower.

But the confessions can be deadly serious. In "The Day I Had to Choose to Live... Or Die" (August, *Real Story*), the narrator learns that her health is more important than her family's demands on her time, and the reader learns some of the early warning signs of cancer.

The confessions have even ventured into political consciousness-raising. "Out to Make Trouble for Me!" in the August *True Story*, uses the first-person formula to outline for the reader a step-by-step procedure for fighting back against policemen who

abuse their authority.

Another recent story was clearly pro-gun control. "We just told what could happen if there's a gun around the house," Florence Moriarty, who doesn't like to be accused of taking sides, says mildly. "We did get a few thousand letters from the National Rifle Association."

"I hate it that these magazines have such a bad reputation," says Felicia Guest, an Atlanta health worker who imitated the format in *True to Life*, a project for which she obtained federal funding. *True to Life*'s stories taught effective birth control, health care for women and the advantages of seeking professional help for sexual problems.

"It worked like gangbusters!" says Guest, who hopes soon to bring out a privately financed *True to Life*. Stories in past issues—"Married Two Years, But We'd Never Made Love," about a woman who can't reach orgasm, and "I Almost Killed My Baby To Keep My Husband," in which the narrator must face up to her child's hereditary disease—sound startlingly like tales from the original *True Confessions*.

Guest doesn't mind the comparison. "Many of the commercial confessions today are doing an amazingly good job of being topical and reasonable and communicating a lot of important information," she says.

Florence Moriarty couldn't agree more. "People have a tendency to be stuffy about these magazines. They shouldn't. They serve a definite purpose. Our audience comes back to us month after month for the only thing they read. These people shouldn't be ignored."

Moriarty, like almost all confession editors, is a college graduate and, of course, a woman. She and other veteran editors seem soft-hearted, genuinely concerned about their readers—and a little repressed. They do not like to tell their ages, and their office decor runs to cute pictures of cats. Their inhibitions may aid them in identifying across a broad educational gap with their blue-collar audience.

Confession editors are not well paid. Although his magazines are "highly profitable," according to

Peter J. Callahan, president of the MacFadden group, the salaries he pays his staff are quite low. A top editor on an individual magazine earns only \$12-\$15,000. And Moriarty, a woman of more than 20 years experience in the field and undoubtedly the highest-paid confession editor in the country, earns only "more than \$25,000," according to Callahan.

Many of the magazines pinch an additional penny by running what they call "reprints," stories from previous issues with the proper names changed. "Love... Sex... Marriage—Widow Style," in the September issue of *Real Love Stories*, is almost certainly a reprint. Not only does it not contain the slightest hint of sex, but in one paragraph the familiar Mario suddenly becomes some stranger named Tony.

The writers who sell to confessions, like the editors, are almost all women. They work out of their homes in places like Tucson and Duluth. Their manuscripts frequently require considerable editing. "Dog-eat-dog rat-race" and "that moral, right and wrong, brainwashing morality" were two phrases that appeared on the first page of one purchased manuscript. When the heroine of this story discovers she has syphilis, she wonders why "we women always go for the foul balls."

Dorothy Collett of Las Vegas, Nevada, started writing for romance magazines when five cents a word was not chickenfeed. She happily admits to being the author of "at least 500" confession stories. "I got through college writing reports on books I hadn't read," she recalls with a laugh. She felt her talent for fiction had

commercial possibilities. "What actually happened was I got divorced. I had a small child to support. I figured writing would be the easiest way. My second piece—it had a religious tone—sold for \$15. I won't tell you the price on the first. I realized I wasn't getting anywhere."

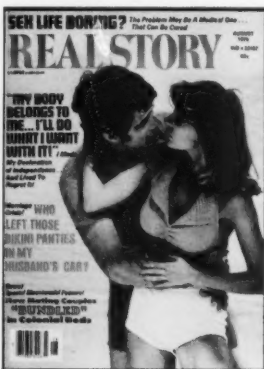
Things looked grim until she stumbled across the confessions. "I thought, 'Hey, this is easy. I can do this.' I studied the stories. I blueprinted the plots." Her first three stories sold. "It was an earn-while-you-learn experience," she says. She was soon turning out about three stories a month, mostly five-cents-a-words. "And my stories were always long. I had trouble keeping them under 10,000 words. It was a good, steady living."

She got her plots "from everywhere—from neighborhood happenings, from newspaper clips, from radio call-in shows." One clip, about a justice of the peace who went on performing marriages after his license expired, yielded four "what-if" plots.

"Would-be writers put the confessions down," she says, "but any real writer person respects them. They are a wonderful training ground. You learn to plot and characterize. You don't have to have a name because they don't use it. I loved the work. I loved to preach, I guess," she says.

And then "that bad, terrible thing" happened to the confessions. For Collett, the bad, terrible thing was the collapse of Dauntless Books, her principle outlet for 15 years. Displaying the optimism in the face of adversity with which she had so often gifted her heroines, the 53-year-old grandmother has not despaired, she's moved on. Her first novel, a paperback titled *The Whispering Leaves*, which she describes as a "modern suspenseful Gothic romance," will be published in March by Major Books of Los Angeles.

What caused the crisis in the confessions that forced her to seek other markets for her work? "I think it was that Nixon-Erlichman thing," she says. "The world went crazy. Everyone used to believe that virtue triumphs. The world stopped believing that." ■



HOW TO JUDGE A CONFESSION

**"Is It Seemly;
Is It Yours To Confess?"**

Motive is everything.

BY THOMAS POWERS

There is something unsettling about a confession. Once it begins you can't be sure where it's going to end. They come late at night, more often than not, when people are tired and have been drinking and perhaps arguing. A kind of surrender takes place. The conversation shifts from the abstract to the personal, and the coherence of the daytime persona reveals its seams. We are all pretty much patchwork, functioning but fragile, and it takes some work to appear all of a piece. When someone begins to talk of the places where he does not hold so well, then our own patchwork is threatened, too.

The patchwork of my friend Alan Luke was stronger than most. He never managed to figure out what life was about, and concluded it was not really about anything at all. He took it as something to enjoy when you could, and to get through otherwise. As a rule, he thought, it ended badly. His response to that elementary fact was, "Well all right." He said it with a growl and a fierce look, only half kidding. It was a point of pride with him to take things as they were, and no mulling or puking or complaint. He loved Shakespeare and could recite huge chunks from every play. "I've got nothing to complain about," he said not long before he died of lung cancer last spring. "I've had 72 good years. I've read a lot of poetry and listened to a lot of music. You'll die too, Joe. Well all right."

He never read a book he hated more than *Portnoy's Complaint*.

It wasn't the novel's veracity he hated; he was ready enough to concede that. And it wasn't even

its subject matter, although he did not see much promise in masturbation as one of the great themes of literature. What Alan Luke hated about *Portnoy's Complaint*, from the day he read it till the day he died, was the fact that Philip Roth wrote it. He simply could not comprehend why Roth would volunteer such stuff about

and uneasy disapproval. It's not just the subject that offends, but the whole enterprise. No one much blamed Norman Podhoretz for liking money and reputation, but few critics were gentle with him for confessing the fact in *Making It* in a way which seemed to reflect on them. It was generally the fact of confession, not the thing confessed, which has been attacked in other books as well—Susan Braudy's *A Woman's Diary*, Barney Collier's *Hope and Fear in Washington*, Ned Rorem's diaries, Barbara Howar's *Laughing All the Way*, etc., etc. Their various admirers had their various reasons, but their critics seemed to me at least to betray uneasiness and even open hostility toward the whole idea of spilling the beans. I once

put the grunt into words, I suspect they would have been something like, "There's nothing new in that. Everybody knows life can break you down. Well all right. You don't have to talk about it."

It was the idea of talking about such things in public which bothered him. Conversation between friends was one thing; cold print addressed to the world was another. Its effects were unpredictable, indiscriminate and immutable.

I ought to emphasize here that Alan's attitude, which I take to be a common one, was based on timorous self-regard, hypocrisy or illusions. He was perfectly prepared to admit things privately which he did not like to see openly confessed. He was not trying to defend an imaginary world in which there was no greed, the rabbit punch was unknown, you could trust the odometers on used cars, sex was ruly and separating marriage partners did, indeed, think of the children. He had no patience for that orotund shock and dismay expressed by so many political figures when it was learned that Nixon had cheated on his income tax. There is a lot of such persiflage and flummery in the world but it is transparent and not to be taken seriously. The hostility to confession which matters is the hostility which focuses not on the subject, however disturbing or unpleasant, but on the act itself. Which rests, that is, on the stoic tenet that you . . . don't talk about it. Or don't write about it.

There would be no such rule, of course, if people did not break it. A lot of confessions were better never made. A death in the family, to give one example, throws survivors into a passionate, heedless and disoriented state for a week or two in which they may think appalling things of one another. Things having to do with money, say, or who was first in a parent's affection. If survivors have the sense to keep their mouths shut about such matters everybody will be better off. The same goes for the wilder shores of sex, most plans to run for public office, one's true opinion of the literary work of friends and the desire to sit next to Jimmy Carter at dinner and convince him that at



himself. He did not affect shock or disgust at *Portnoy's* desperate and inventive self-abuse; that was part of the ordeal of adolescence: you accepted and lived with it, but you didn't confess it. That, Alan felt, violated every tenet of human dignity.

This is far from being a minor point of view. St. Augustine and Rousseau ran into it, and somewhere in the reaction to most recent confessional writing there has been a similar note of irritated

wrote an article—I suppose it could be called a confession—about the effect of professional failure on friendship, and while a lot of people seemed to think it was okay, a lot of others thought I was plain crazy to talk about it in public. Alan Luke never said so, but I suspect he was one of them. I explained why I thought the subject was interesting and legitimate, but he continued to look doubtful and responded only with a grunt. If he had been willing to

Thomas Powers won a Pulitzer Prize for national reporting.

last he has met someone he can trust. Between those rich bursts of thought and feeling which make man divine there is a lot of unruly static in the human mind which it will do us no good to reveal, and others no good to hear. There, truly, you might as well not talk about it.

A lot of superfluous confessions identify themselves, and we know we are in for it as soon as they begin, unless we are the offending party, in which case we're lucky if second thoughts interrupt us after the first halting word or two. But not all cases are so clear, and what looks like a good idea in the evening may be part of a hangover in the morning. A mistake in print is still worse, because it can't be called back and may damage others who have a right to consider themselves innocent bystanders. The problem is to find some sort of rule or litmus that will separate confessions which are a good idea from those which are foolish or unfair or both. In this regard two questions about a proposed confession strike me as useful: is it seemly, and is it yours to confess?

Seemly is not a word that gets much use now, but I can't think of another which serves as well. It is not the subject that matters so much, as the manner in which it is broached. In one of his essays, Norman Mailer says he keeps track of his spiritual health through the odor of his excrement, an unseemly confession, one might think, if there ever was one. But Mailer's enthusiasm for his discovery is so manifestly serious, practical and even clinical in spirit that he might be a wise old doctor telling us to feed a cold and starve a fever. The fact that he has an idea, half-nutty but half-inspired, makes all the difference. Other writers dealing with equally treacherous subjects fail because they are not really sure what they've got in mind. Sex is a rock on which a lot of them founder. It's okay to say you've taken advantage of women all your life and regret it now, as a number of men have elected to do recently, but not if you sound boastful, complacent, salacious and sniggering. It is a confession's fraudulence which offends, not its sub-

ject. Seemliness is not a matter of being prim or circumspect, but of subordinating raw experience to an idea. If a confession is not to be exhibition—pure and simple, it ought to have a point.

It takes a certain amount of dammed emotion to prompt a confession, whatever the subject, but there is always a danger the dam will burst before the emotion has been understood, absorbed and transcended. A hysterical outburst of self-contempt may feel good for 20 minutes, but it's likely to be formless or pointless, an unloading of raw emotion upon an audience which won't know what to do with it. From time to time I get angry at myself for some literary failure—writing a stupid article, or pursuing a dumb, boring, unworkable idea, or failing to see what a piece is about. Worst of all is to write a wooden piece about something which matters to me. It's an awful feeling, like coming to a washed-out bridge. Once, while crossing the street with my wife a couple of years ago, the knowledge of some irredeemable botch suddenly swept over me and I began to shout imprecations at myself as if I were a war criminal. What was the point of that? I was hardly in the mood for wifely reassurance, and I certainly didn't want her to suggest I quit writing and find a job. The confession was perfectly sincere, but it was also pointless.

Barney Collier seemed equally aimless and passionate in *Hope and Fear in Washington*. The book had some interesting things in it, but the whole struck me as an unconscious act of revenge, not so much a confession by the author that he was a worm, as a kind of begging letter for public indulgence on the ground he was no worse than his colleagues. Collier did not seem to be trying to understand why he had made such a mess of things, or to instruct by horrible example, but to convince himself that the chaos was natural and inevitable and ... okay. Seymour Krim's *Shake it for the World*, *Smartass* had the same tone of sneaking pride. The title alone set my teeth on edge. Both confessions struck me as unseemly because they were so

THE TALESE RULE

Do Reporters Have The Right To Privacy?



Lily Hou

Are reporters private citizens? Should they enjoy all the rights to privacy of other citizens? Or, now that they command so much public power, do they have some of the obligations of public officials?

Gay Talese has said that he feels obligated to answer any question a reporter puts to him about his life and his work because he's in the business of asking other people about their private lives. Talese even maintains a listed number in the phone book, a token of his good faith. Talese's willingness to cooperate with other journalists without reservation has caused him some embarrassment—two long magazine profiles (in *New York* and *Esquire*) focusing on his energetic personal research for his ambitious book on sex. Each profile went out of its way to call attention to the predicament in which this intimate research left his wife. But Talese has not abandoned his stance.

We decided to ask some working journalists what they thought about the Talese Rule (Give quotes unto others if you would have others give quotes unto you), and what they thought was the extent of their obligations to fellow reporters and to the public.

BEN BRADLEE *Washington Post*

Should a reporter covering human relations reveal his or her moral views and personal relationships and inclinations?

empty of comprehension and resolve.

Norman Podhoretz' *Making It*, a book ignored where it was not unfairly maligned, did not strike me that way at all. It had its awkward and unreconciled moments, notably where Podhoretz suggests the proper reward of self-knowledge is a fat royalty check and invitations to the best parties. But that had the tone of a late idea, as if it had been penciled into the galleys. I took the book as a whole as a serious effort by a serious man to unburden himself of a lot of pious junk, to shuck a borrowed personality, not austere but priggish, so that he might free himself of unnecessary anxiety and thereby better tap his energies for work that mattered. If it was

awkward, it was still a courageous first step into territory that was uncharted for reasons of timidity alone. The reaction to the book seemed to confirm this. A lot of critics, despite the loftiest possible public style, sounded as if their true feeling was, oh no, you ain't getting me out there, Norman.

The seemliness of a confession is determined by its direction; it ought to proceed outward from inward understanding. The decision to go public ought to be to liberate rather than impulsive, and it ought to be an honest offering, rather than a plea for reassurance. If the writer does not have some reason for exposing himself, if he cannot offer himself as an example of something which

No way. I will not talk about my private life to a reporter. **Should reporters be required to make disclosures of their tax returns, financial holdings, vested interests?**

People who cover business and financial news ought to make their positions known to their editors, but no way they should have to reveal them to reporters.

Don't you think this extends to newspaper people a degree of immunity from scrutiny that they wouldn't themselves extend to a public official?

I'm not sure why public officials shouldn't have the same privilege, provided that their private lives don't interfere with their public lives. I answer telephone calls, but I won't reveal sources. Newspaper people ought to be open. Candor is fine.

I don't answer everyone, but I'll give their questions a whack; but I will not talk on my private life."

CLARK MOLLENHOFF *Des Moines Register*

On the Talese Rule:

Basically, I do agree. Wherever it is related to public interest and my work, yes. There are some personal things unrelated such as my family. I feel no obligation to answer.

How about personal finances?

Unless these finances are related to government operations or to stories that I am doing, I feel no obligation to respond. . . . I think if a reporter is asking such a question, he is obligated to tell why he is asking it.

What limits do you place on which reporters and which publications you talk to?

I won't say a damn thing to anyone about a story I'm working on. I usually try to be helpful, but I don't want to get scooped. I would want to be sure it is a serious inquiry. Some people take what you say and deliberately distort it. This has happened to me. I wouldn't answer a damn thing from them . . . except sometimes I will in writing where there is no chance for distortion. There are a few I wouldn't even give a written reply, and a large number I am cautious about . . . I think

quoting other reporters is often an easy and sloppy way to get a story.

Are reporters thin-skinned?

For the most part, we are very thin-skinned. We should try to be overly careful about this. We shouldn't expect any particular favors. Reporters are not accustomed to criticism.

Should a reporter reveal his or her moral views and personal inclinations?

Not necessarily, if it is immaterial to a story. But if a reporter has a preconceived notion about a story, he should state this openly. It happens damn seldom. It should happen more. I have prejudices. I'm against crooks in government . . . A reporter's pattern of questions should reveal his views to some extent. I don't agree with the smiling reporter who gives the "I'm your old pal, I'm a good old boy, too" line to a person he is interviewing, and tries to get them off-guard. It is a questionable tactic. It is wrong. There is enough wrong in the world that there is no need to make anything up. A reporter shouldn't patronize. He has to lean over backwards to be fair.

CAREY MCWILLIAMS *The Nation*

On the Talese Rule:

I would say not, it's a personal bias. We're in a period now when exposure is a mania. Elected officials are in a different situation than reporters; there's some reason to be curious about their private dealings.

LIZ SMITH *New York Daily News*

On the Talese Rule:

Everybody, including public figures, should answer questions even if it is a "no comment." That in itself is an answer.

On financial disclosure:

If somebody wants to know my financial holdings, they sure can. It would be a healthy idea to disclose that kind of information. An honest journalist shouldn't mind.

probably touches us too, then he might as well hold back, at least until he has figured things out a bit. It is the gratuitous confession which makes us long to leave the room. Of course it's easy to make mistakes in matters of this sort, and to offer something as general which is only embarrassingly singular, but that is the hazard of the genre. If we make fools of ourselves, well, foolishness is not a capital crime. A charge of betrayal is more damaging.

Being free, we can dispose of ourselves as we like, cautiously or wantonly as the spirit moves. But a confession of another's confidence, of someone else's secret, constitutes a breach of contract, theft and felonious assault. Or may, depending on the cir-

cumstances. This is the murkiest title in confessional law.

The English novelist Hugh Walpole, who knew Henry James during his last years, told friends that he had once offered himself to James sexually. James, touched and agonized, finally stammered out, "I can't . . . I can't." This story and James' correspondence with one or two young men constitute all the extant evidence that James' lifelong celibacy might be explained by homosexuality. If true, it was certainly not something James wanted known. He was the most reticent of men, going so far, near the end of his life, as to burn just about every letter he had ever received, and begging his correspondents to destroy his to them.

He thought writers were entitled to speak through their work alone, if they chose, and he did not want biographers hunting out his secrets among his literary remains. The question, then, is whether Walpole had a right to tell that story?

No one could deny Walpole the right to confess anything he liked about himself, but in this instance he was reporting something which did not belong to him, namely James' ambiguous and therefore revealing reply. If Walpole had published an article about the encounter the following morning, the case would be clear. It would constitute an outrageous invasion of James' privacy, and betrayal of his trust. But time muddies the moral waters. Wal-

pole did not publish the story; he told it to friends, after James' death, and it did not find its way into print until after Walpole's death as well. But all the same, James' half of the story was his; he never intended to give it away, and in effect, albeit slowly and by stages and not till after his death, his secret was simply seized from him.

Another, more recent example was the memoir of Winston Churchill by his personal physician, Lord Moran. When the memoir was published it brought outraged attacks on Moran for a double betrayal of Churchill's privacy—in this case, an account of his long mental and physical decline—by a man who was both friend and doctor, and thereby doubly sworn

JACK NELSON *Los Angeles Times***On the Talese Rule:**

Basically, I would agree with that.

On financial disclosure:

I have no qualms about financial disclosures. I won't release my salary because it might cause internal problems with the *L.A. Times*. But, I am perfectly willing to disclose my sources of private income. I won't take any money from a government source.

Are reporters thin-skinned?

I can't make a generality... But I have seen some cases of this. For example, a reporter complains about a politician being arrogant and he himself is arrogant. Politicians are more thick-skinned... They've had more of it thrown at them.

NAT HENTOFF *The Village Voice***On the Talese Rule:**

By and large I agree with that. Reporters are public figures. Even a reporter on a small country weekly is a public figure by virtue of the impact that he has on what he writes on.

On private relationships:

You shouldn't report on private lives unless the private life is manifestly a part of the public figure.

If a reporter is writing on city finances and is a friend of Felix Rohatyn, it's very hard for the reporter unless they're extremely objective; it's hard to write critically on a friend.

On financial disclosure:

I don't see how you can mandate it constitutionally; it ought to be encouraged voluntarily. Tax returns don't mean much to a reporter who is covering sports. The relationship between private holdings and the reporter's writing should be the determining factor.

ROBERT SCHEER *Los Angeles Times***On the Talese Rule:**

If I respect the writer's intention, I would answer any questions. I don't believe in gossip writing. I was just interviewed

by a woman from *Redbook* who asked many personal questions, and I answered them because her interests were serious. If the questions asked were frivolous I would say fuck you, but I would say that if I was asked a frivolous question about my politics.

On financial disclosure:

There should be no different standards. Everyone should be forced to reveal his holdings. It should be a general rule for all people: professors, doctors, politicians, etc.

MIKE WALLACE *CBS News***On the Talese Rule:**

I disagree with Talese in degree. I feel an obligation to be helpful, forthcoming, and not to hide pertinent information. However, I reserve to myself the right to tell an inquiring reporter that your question is not germane and my answer is none of your business.

What consideration, if any, do you give to questions from another reporter?

To some extent, my willingness to talk depends on the subject matter, what the reporter has in mind and the regard in which I hold the reporter and his publication. If a reporter feels that in the course of reporting a story... his questions are aimed at seeing if I was dishonest or unethical in my job, he has every right to ask the question and I have an obligation to answer.

Where do you draw the line regarding personal questions?

I surely have no obligation to answer. What I choose to do in private is my business... If there is a suspected conflict of interest, financially or otherwise, the reporter has every right to ask and I have an obligation to answer. We [reporters] have motives, too.

Are reporters thin-skinned?

I find many reporters among the most thin-skinned of interviewees.

Should a reporter dealing with human relations reveal

to reticence. No one, and certainly not Churchill, gave Moran the right to publish what he knew; he simply went ahead and did it. His defense was that Churchill, once dead, belonged to the ages, and that his revelations all had a direct bearing on the performance of Churchill's public duties.

If we are to justify the revelations in these two instances, we must posit two principles of confessional law which can compromise a man's right to possession of his own secrets. The first would be a statute of limitations. A breach of trust which is felonious the morning after is diluted, over time, until it reduces to a misdemeanor and finally passes from the realm of crime altogether.

A second statute would establish a kind of public interest in private lives by eminent domain. Churchill had a right to his privacy just as another man has a right to his house and land, but in both cases the right can be compromised by a claim of public necessity. If the state has a right to seize land for some pressing public purpose, such as a missile launch site or bacterial warfare proving ground, the public can claim an interest in Churchill's mental degeneration. The enabling acts in such instances are partly specious, because nine times out of 10 our curiosity is purely idle. The tenth time, and the death of the victim, tip the balance toward the legitimacy of exposure.

But what of a confession which involves purely private persons still very much alive? Here the matter becomes sticky. Susan Braudy's account of the end of her marriage necessarily involved her husband, too. She thought there was something to be gained by describing what happened, and, liking the book, I agree; but her husband held a different view. I could almost hear him crying out, "Why me? What have I done?" She changed his name and got his permission on paper, which was all she could do, but all the same a lot more of his private life was revealed than he ever would have volunteered on his own.

The most conscientious and sober confession always runs this risk of injury to others. In a fine

essay called "The Lapping, Itchy Edge of Love," published in *The Courage of Turtles*, Edward Hoagland talks about a woman I know. He changed her name and employer but his description of her is so vivid and accurate it would be impossible to mistake her for anyone else. She told me he had been an early lover so there was no surprise there, but she told him a few things she never told me, and maybe never wanted me to know. Now I know anyway. She never gave him the right to do this; he just did it anyway.

It used to seem unfair to me that Ernest Hemingway's correspondents were barred from publishing his letters, but now I'm not so sure. A private letter or remark comes with a clouded title. In one

his or her moral views or personal inclinations?

I see no reason for him to do that. After all, he is a professional and can report fairly and accurately no matter what his personal relationships and moral views. If he can't, he ought not to be in the business.

TOM SNYDER *NBC News*

On the Talese Rule:

In principle, I agree. I do believe that reporters owe other reporters the courtesy of answering questions.

On financial disclosure:

This is a situation ethic and it depends on the story which is being investigated. I work for the National Broadcasting Company and if I owned holdings in this company or another broadcasting company I would disclose it. It depends on what is being investigated.

Should you reveal moral views, personal relationships and inclinations?

Concerning the moral views I would reveal mine, if asked. About the personal relationships and inclinations, I say no. I don't ask those kind of questions because I know that I don't want to answer those kind of questions.

RICHARD REEVES *New York Magazine*

On the Talese Rule:

Agree almost totally. There are things involving my private life, my mother for instance, that I won't talk about. I've printed my income taxes. He [Talese] apparently has written about his sex life . . . My details are so boring . . .

Is it hypocrisy to stonewall another reporter?

Yes, in most circumstances. In a competitive situation, there is no obligation. Katharine Graham's two-year moratorium on interviews is unconscionable. I think the refusal of most of the executives of the three networks and *The New York Times* to talk to reporters is equally unconscionable. There is no reason why politicians shouldn't refuse to talk to any of these organizations' reporters . . . I'd like to see a politician put a two-year moratorium on interviews . . .

Are reporters able to dish it out but unable to take it back?

I'd say that is a fair statement. The most unreasonable complaints I've received are from the press . . . The most ludicrous thing in America today are stories in *The New York Times*, which concern the *Times*, but which are only official statements, when we all know the *Times* is deliberately keeping things from the public about itself.

Should reporters be forced to disclose personal finances?

Nobody should be forced to disclose finances . . . Perhaps there should be an informal rule about it.

Is a reporter a hypocrite if he doesn't reveal a personal bias of a story?

It is being a hypocrite, but there is no need to volunteer bias.

BILL MOYERS *CBS News*

On the Talese Rule:

There are aspects of my personal life that I think ought not to be an open door. If they had a bearing on a story I was covering, yes, but to give a carte blanche to someone to look into my private life, no. I don't think the idea of full disclosure applies to public officials either. It's a question of propriety.

On disclosures:

Whether Jack Anderson has interests in a Korean CIA-owned bank is a matter the public should be interested in as a matter of Anderson's credibility when covering the bank. If Anderson has an affair with the wife of another journalist, that's another story. You can't make blanket statements. To pose a hypothetical question, what if Anderson wrote pieces critical of the husband of the woman he was having an affair with? Once his writing the story affects another journalist, he should then disclose that in his life which affects his work. It's a very delicate balancing situation; you don't want to hide behind a self-righteous shield of privacy. I'm troubled by a society with no privacy, no restraints, no sense of decency.

Some things that remain matters of personal propriety are my religion, my family, my own habits and eccentricities. ■

sense it belongs to us, because it was given to us, but in another it remains the property of the original owner. We have been invited to share it, not to carry it off and sell it as we like.

If this is true of a shared confidence, then it ought to be quadruply true of a shared life. Love is the most specific of gifts. Where it's concerned there can be no question that what we have received was meant for us alone. If you can't trust a wife or lover, you can hardly trust anyone at all. Does this mean Brady and Hoagland had no right to publish what they did?

If I'm reluctant to charge them with disloyalty, it's because they are both so honest about themselves, and so free of malice, and

above all so serious in purpose. In their case motive counts for a lot. Honorable intentions are hard to establish, but it is certainly something like honor which makes Brady and Hoagland much harder on themselves than others, and which allows them to use their own failures and pain for a general purpose. I get no sense they are merely signaling for attention or sympathy, or have been reckless with the confidence of others, or take sly opportunity to settle old scores. But even so they have told us things that were not properly theirs to tell. Does this mean they should have maintained their silence?

The arguments for silence are clear and have a firm moral foundation. The arguments for revela-

tion are not clear at all and must slide over the question of loyalty, but I find them compelling all the same. It's not just that Brady and Hoagland have a right to their half of life, too; if they are obliged to be circumspect with others, they ought to be correspondingly free with themselves. But more important is the unsettling, even threatening nature of confession itself, which I take to be evidence of its eloquence and power. When someone says something which is both patently honest and disturbing, we ought not to find reasons to shut him up or turn away.

I'd probably be more persuasive here if I could quote a chapter or two of Brady's book. Her estrangement from her husband is painful to watch, filled with mis-

understanding, recrimination, self-deception and sadness. She thinks it explains a lot about men and women in a sexist culture. I think it explains a lot about men and women, period. Her desire to be free, only half-recognized at first, had an elemental force which broke through what it could not reason away. I had watched similar things in life, just as most other people have, but I had never heard anyone talk about it. Around it, yes, but not really about it. If the story was painful for her husband, it cannot have been one-half so painful as the fact. It's unsettling to listen to a confession, but once we have heard the note of sincerity which separates it from exhibition, there is only one thing to do: listen. ■

LIEBLING V

The Fifth Annual A.J. Lieblich Counter Convention, an all-day affair held at New York's Hilton on November 23, featured six panels: "The Art of the Interview," "Sources," "Gossip," "TV programming," "Pornography on the Run" and "Private Investigators."

At the end of the day the A.J. Lieblich Award for Journalistic Distinction was presented to CBS's "Sixty Minutes". The award cited the investigative TV show "For its consistent imagination, solid reporting and, most of all for demonstrating over the past decade that network television news programming can aspire to something more than predictable mediocrity."

Accepting the award for "Sixty Minutes" was producer Don Hewitt accompanied by correspondents Mike Wallace and Morley Safer. (Photos by Lily Hou)



James Brady, World News Corporation Vice Chairman, and Nancy Collins, Women's Wear Daily reporter hold forth at panel on gossip.



Carl Bernstein, responds to a question from the audience raised at the panel on "Sources—What Hath Deep Throat Wrought?"



Times reporter Nick Gage responding to a question from the audience at the panel on "Sources." To his left, Jack Newfield. To his right, moderator Sam Roberts of the New York Daily News, Dan Dorfman of New York Magazine, Nat Hentoff, The Village Voice, and Gabe Pressman of WNEW-TV.



The Art of the Interview; controversial panel featured (from left) Dave Marash (WCBS-TV), Bob Scheer (now L.A. Times), moderator Richard Reeves (New York Magazine), Nora Ephron (Esquire), Roger Grimsby (WABC-TV); David Halberstam, author, and G. Barry Golson (Playboy).



Molly Haskell of The Village Voice and Brendan Gill of The New Yorker participate in the "Porn on the Run" panel.



Publisher Clay Felker (wearing Liebling V tag) with author Gail Sheehy, sitting in on Private Eye panel.



Jeff Greenfield, moderator of TV Programming panel.



Sixty Minutes' correspondents Morley Safer and Mike Wallace, relax during presentation of Liebling award. At left, MORE associate editor David Rubin.

MIN

Media Industry Newsletter

What are the ingredients that make this one newsletter interesting to executives at firms as diverse as: Time, Inc.; Dow Jones; Gannett; New York Times Co.; McGraw-Hill; ABC; CBS; NBC; Capital Cities; Metromedia; JWT; Y&R; BBD&O; O&M; Merrill Lynch; Oppenheimer; Citibank; Chase; Chilton; Technical; Procter & Gamble; Gallagher Report; Colgate; Revlon; Warner-Lambert; American; Liggett & Meyers; AT&T; Warner Communications; Exxon; Mobil; Harcourt Brace Jovanovich; Random House; Macmillan; MCI; Columbia Pictures, and Dun & Bradstreet.

It may be because MIN is notoriously well informed on the following:

- * **People**...who are the movers...the bench warmers...the power-hungry...the artful, the crafty...the clever...the perceptive...how much do they earn?...what kind of bonus/incentive arrangements do they have? What are their next moves?
- * **News**...searching for the economic motives...minifying the minarets of wisdom...unmasking the mincing pronouncements of corporate heads...mingling in the board rooms, boarding in the mingle-mangle of bars and newsrooms...scouring the corridors of power...watching power scoured.
- * **Features**...interpreting media events and offering perspectives on the future...reviewing financial and statistical reports of publicly-held publishers, broadcasters, ad agencies...estimating sales and earnings of privately-held companies.
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- * **Cautionary marketing tales**...the inside look at marketing failures...who made the decisions...who pulled the plug...the aftermath of the debacle...typical title: How a Ten Cent Phone Call Could Have Saved Warner-Lambert Ten Million Dollars.
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LITERACY

JIMMY CARTER
AIN'T PEANUTSCarter's Autobiography
Impresses With Sincerity

Imagine Ford writing a book!

BY JOHN SIMON

There comes a moment in every language critic's life when he must let down his editors. I am sure I was assigned Jimmy Carter's *Why Not the Best?* as a topic for this column on the assumption that I would make mincemeat of the president-elect's literacy. Having found his language deficient during the presidential debates, I confess that I came to the book expecting to scoff. But I stayed with it to pray. This Jimmy Carter is a remarkable man. He is not, and does not claim to be, a writer; his formal education was not the most glittering, and certainly did not stress literacy; but his book, for all that, is far from illiterate, even if it does have its share of grammatical and stylistic errors. Can you imagine President Ford writing a book? Or even reading one? Carter tells us that he reads three or four books a week, and I believe him.

I find it fairly disgraceful, for instance, that in a recent column Pauline Kael refers to "the third protagonist" of *Jaws*; Miss Kael is a professional writer, and *The New Yorker* is our most rigorously researched and copy-edited publication—policed would hardly be too strong a word for it. But Broadman Press of Nashville, which originally published *Why Not the Best?*, is an outfit I never even heard of; and Bantam, which brought out the paperback version, is not very likely to have

John Simon is film critic of *New York magazine* and drama critic of *The New Leader* and *The Hudson Review*.

done any supplementary copy-editing.

So we get mistakes—some serious—like subjunctives where indicatives are indicated ("if the author were correct" for "if the author is correct"), or an accusative for a nominative ("the person . . . whom I later learned was a teacher's aide"), incorrect agreement ("each one serious in themselves"), dangling participles, tautologies, faulty punctuation, poor usage such as the impersonal "hopefully" or "centered around" for "centered on," and so forth. But the pages are by no means crawling with errors, and some mistakes are rather touching. Thus Carter misspells Thomas Gainsborough "Gainesborough," thinking perhaps of Gainesville, Georgia, where his father went to school. His fellow midshipmen and he listen "to Liebestod" instead of "to the Liebestod." But isn't it wonderful that this Georgia farmer should know and care about Gainsborough, which Nixon would have identified as a dog food. As for Wagner, I doubt whether even John F. Kennedy listened to such music, except under compulsion.

All this, however, is unimportant compared to what emerges from the book about Carter's intelligence, honesty, determination, courage, energy, modesty and generosity. Yes, he is ambitious, but in an enlightened way, with ambition at the service of ideals; power is enjoyable because it can prove useful to humanity at large, not because it

swells your own pockets or increases your prestige. Now, I realize, anyone can pretend to this; but it is, I think, impossible to read *Why Not the Best?* without being convinced of its sincerity. The proof is in the details: the illustrative anecdotes, the examples adduced, the choices made. The incidents Carter cites as important to him are not self-aggrandizing—the tone vouches for this. Rather, they are humane, delicate and unnoticeable to any but the sensitive eye and heart.

Carter is not the cultural equal of a Stevenson, McCarthy or McGovern. But considering that he grew up as a farm boy in Archery, a minute outpost of Plains, Georgia, which itself numbered only a few hundred souls, he has done exceedingly well by himself. It is moving to read his tribute to Miss Julia Coleman, the crippled, spinster English teacher who introduced him at the age of 12 to *War and Peace*, "written by the Russian novelist Tolstoy." However simple Carter's analysis of the novel, it is accurate and glows with conviction—we can grasp why it became his favorite book, and can believe that he reread it more than once. Clearly, the book was a challenge to the boy, as many other things have since been challenges to the grown and still growing man. It is fascinating to contemplate about how many diverse experiences—some of them painful, or at least entailing arduous work—Carter's comment is that they were "educational" or "enjoyable" or something similar.

His godmother, not knowing what she was doing, gave the four-year-old Jimmy the complete works of Maupassant. Remarks Carter: "It was, of course, years later before [sic] I read through this set of volumes." But, by God, read through it he surely did. For a set of books before his nose is just as much of a challenge to Jimmy Carter as is raising the biggest possible crop of peanuts, finding out the utmost about other people and places, learning to understand music and art, delving into the arcana of nuclear physics, becoming deacon or governor or president, practicing Christianity, and generally enjoying himself by studying, work-

ing, playing as hard as he can manage. There are some grandiose hopes expressed in this book, but there can be no doubt that the man believes in them and manfully strives for their realization. There is no hollow phrasemaking, no ostentation, no pretentiousness anywhere in these pages. The idealism is strengthened by shrewdness, the Christianity is a way of living that expresses itself in charity, fraternity and a wonderful tolerance for things alien to Carter's values.

All right, he does quote approvingly some perfectly beastly-verses by Sidney Lanier, such as "With a lover's pain to attain the plain," which could be of use only to Eliza Doolittle; but he it said for Carter that their sentiment is unexceptionable, and for Lanier that he wrote better things than "The Song of the Chattahoochee." Yet Carter also mentions that he likes both Bob Dylan and Dylan Thomas, and he gives us apt quotations from Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich, Kierkegaard and Kuan Tzu. Not the broadest spectrum perhaps, but eminently respectable; and, unlike LBJ or his speechwriters, Carter does not attribute "Dover Beach" to Robert Lowell.

Carter is smart. To give only one example, he actually read up on the campaign platforms of numerous losers, to find out why they lost. And Carter has a sense of words: "The word 'welfare,'" he writes, "no longer signifies how much we care, but often arouses feelings of contempt and even hatred." He is canny: he knows, for example, that a reform has to be bold and comprehensive to earn popular support; small and incremental changes get squelched by special-interest groups with the tacit support of public apathy.

Above all, unlike the McGoverns and McCarthys, Carter is practical. The amount of money he saved the state of Georgia as governor, while vastly increasing services and facilities, is impressive; when he left office, the state surplus was \$200 million and the budget was \$10 million below that of the previous year. That ain't peanuts. I think we've got ourselves a good man, and the best eligible president. ■

SO YOU WANT TO BE A STAR?

Writers Institute Can Be "Your Passport To Successful Writing"

"Creative Journalism" course for \$309.

BY CHRIS WELLES

"I am indeed delighted to inform you that our editorial staff, after evaluating your writing aptitude test, has concluded that you have demonstrated very real writing potential."

Thus began a letter I received recently from Shirley Kahn, director of something called the Writers Institute, the "training division" of the Newspaper Institute of America, located in Mamaroneck and a correspondence school licensed and supervised by the New York State Department of Education. Several weeks earlier, the Writers Institute, which apparently had obtained my name from a mailing list, sent me an aptitude test it said would indicate whether I had sufficient talent to be admitted to their \$309 "Practical Course of Training in Creative Journalism." I decided I would try to determine how badly one can do on the test and still be accepted. Figuring I might be identified as a ringer if I made my answers hopelessly inept, I tried to make them close to what I imagined might be those of a ninth grader with no unusual verbal proclivities who would likely be destined for a fine career as an auto mechanic or clothing salesman.

Since correspondence schools naturally have a vested interest in accepting instead of rejecting, I suspected I still had a fairly good chance of getting in. And indeed that was what happened. But what surprised me was the accompanying evaluation of my writing potential assertedly based on my test results. Had I been a legitimate test-taker, it might have made me feel I was only \$309 away from becoming the new Mailer/Wood-

stein/Bellow, a media hero of the first rank. An individually typed analysis of my test by "DS," which was contained in a blue envelope marked "Your Passport to Successful Writing," said, "I would like to see this promising writer join us. Writing ambition and natural talents were clearly displayed to me. These coupled with training could lead to a stimulating and profitable experience for Mrs. Wells." (Sic. The Writers Institute, like too many writers, was a little sloppy in fact-checking. I had used the name Charles Wells in my application.)

The first part of the test was labeled "The Observation Test." It showed a standard flood picture: a fireman and other men standing in the water putting women and children into a boat, houses submerged up to their windows, a helicopter, a motorboat, a swimming dog, etc. I was instructed to "pretend you're actually on the scene" and list things "that you believe would be important in writing a complete account of what actually happened." The purpose of this section of the test, it said, was "to determine the degree to which you now possess the faculty for observing details. The ability to see the little things that escape the eye of the ordinary observer is the first essential qualification for a writer of fact or fiction."

Among the details I observed: "The men with coats rescuing the children." "A lot of wood floating on the water." "The water doesn't seem all that deep." "People in the windows are waving, probably for help." "The helicopter." "The dog is swimming in a different direction from the speedboat." "The TV aerial looks pretty bent. So does the telephone poles." "One of the



November 8, 1976

Mrs. Charles Wells
470 Broome St.
New York NY 10013

Dear Mrs. Wells:

I am indeed delighted to inform you that our editorial staff, after evaluating your writing aptitude test, has concluded that you have demonstrated very real writing potential.

In these days when fewer than one out of three receive such positive comments, your test results should certainly give you personal satisfaction.

With direction, in our opinion Mrs. Wells, your writing qualities could lead to success in a number of different writing fields. And for that reason I am equally pleased to advise you that you have also been accepted in The Writers Institute, the training division of N.I.A.

What you do now is up to you Mrs. Wells. The material we are sending should answer all your questions. If you still have any uncertainties, please feel free to write to me. My staff and I are always ready to be of help--now, and hopefully in the months to come.

Good luck.

Shirley Kahn

You're accepted, Mrs. Wells! Now just send us your check . . .

men rescuing the kids has a fireman's hat on." "Everyone is wearing something on their head."

DS's comment: "While a few significant details were overlooked, most of the important details were correctly noted. This indicates basic powers of observation and comprehension."

The second section contained 13 multiple-choice word-definition questions. I correctly picked the meanings of such words as "dubious," "perplexed" and "dissimilar." But I missed four words: "ferocious" (I said it meant "man-eating" instead of "fierce"), "nominated," "empathy" and "pathological." DS noted the errors but concluded, "Mrs. Wells shows a good understanding of words and their usage. Grasp of the language is excellent and will be an asset in preparing for a career in writing."

The third part of the test concerned "creative story editing."

It involved a story about a school bus that had mysteriously disappeared. I was asked to fill in blank spaces with a suitable word or phrase and propose "what you think will happen next and how you think the story will be resolved." In a section about the driver that said he was "a skilled mechanic and a _____ driver for the children," I proposed "good." In a section discussing the reaction of the driver's father, which said "his eyes were filled with hurt and _____ at the thought his son could be suspected," I suggested "upset." A description of the place where the bus was last seen read, "Heavy wire guard rails _____ the road from the lake for the full two miles." I offered "guarded."

My proposed ending to the story: "The next day, the police got a phone call from Maloney [the driver]. He said he wanted a big ransom, or the kids would not be returned in one piece. He said

Chris Welles is a contributing editor of MORE.

COPY DESK MEMORANDUM



Writing Aptitude Test of

Mrs. Charles Wells

Analyzed by

K

Reviewed by

DS

Date November 8, 1976

Comments

I would like to see this promising writer join us. Writing ambition and natural talents were clearly displayed to me. These coupled with training could lead to a stimulating and profitable experience for Mrs. Wells.

The magic words that guaranteed a great future for the talented Mrs. Wells. The "experts" were impressed.

he wanted \$300,000.00. But the police refused. So when Maloney knew he wouldn't get any money, and he didn't want to kill the kids because he wasn't that mean, he decided to give himself up. The police let him off, because they didn't think he'd probably do it again."

DS seemed pleased with my creativity. He/she said this part of the test "showed a good workable vocabulary. There is evidence of graphic thinking. Facts are presented with precision and clarity. Words seem to be well chosen. Some carefully directed practice would go far in expanding the horizons of one so capable. The conclusion of the story is reasonable and effective. The suggested ending is simple and restrained. Creativity, independent judgment and verbal fluency are apparent."

The final section, called the "Reaction Test," asked me to study four photographs and write "a word or phrase that best describes the feelings, emotions or mood depicted in each." One picture, a storm scene, showed some large waves breaking against a sea wall. Underneath were sample captions: "fury or nature's onslaught." My caption was: "Waves smashing against the wall." Another picture showed a smiling woman handing a piece of paper to a man lying in a bed. The sample captions were "the relief of recovery or thankfulness." Mine was "a big check for the sick man."

DS liked my reactions: "The choice of captions for the photographs shows insight and understanding of emotions. Each one conveys the sensitivity that is so

important for a writer."

Summing up, DS observed: "Certainly the results show capability and the necessary basics to transmit ideas effectively. There is little doubt that working with our editors can expand these fundamentals whether the final objective is to earn money, benefit others or gain other personal satis-

faction. I am confident we can help Mrs. Wells develop the skills to realize her full potential."

If I had any doubt that I ought to realize the enormous potential I had so abundantly displayed, I need only have read the inscription on the envelope containing my Writers Institute acceptance material: "Yes, mine is the thrill

of reaching millions ... Making them laugh, weep, grin, hate, sympathize, hunger, love and think! I inform as well as entertain; inspire as well as charm; comfort or drive to action. Mine is indeed a power unique and fascinating. *I am a writer.*"

My check, as they say, is in the mail. ■

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OUTRAGE

THE SCREWING OF HUSTLER

Larry Flynt Indicted On "Organized Crime" Charge

Publisher faces 25-year stretch.

BY ROBERT SNYDER

First it was Harry Reems of *Deep Throat*. Then Al Goldstein of *Screw*. Now *Hustler's* Larry Flynt has become the latest victim of a zealous local prosecutor bent on stamping out pornography—as he defines it.

The prosecutor is Simon Leis of Hamilton County, Ohio. The charge is "pandering obscenity," which carries a penalty of up to six months in jail or a \$1,000 fine—bad enough, but nothing compared to the second charge Flynt faces when his case comes up for trial in early January. Larry Flynt is charged under Section 2923.04 of Ohio's penal code, the infamous organized crime statute that has nothing whatsoever to do with the Mafia. Simply stated, 2923.04 says that whenever five

people conspire to break the law—any law, no matter how trivial—they are engaging in organized crime. And Leis says that the production of *Hustler* is a conspiracy in organized crime.

Flynt's indictment under 2923.04 is certainly the most bizarre legal weapon unleashed by a prosecutor since the U.S. Supreme Court declined to set a national standard for obscenity and instead allowed individual states to set their own guidelines. The organized crime statute is a civil libertarian's nightmare. In both its vagueness and the severity of its penalties, it clearly recalls the years following Kent State when radicals and dissidents were harassed and brought to court on the same sort of conspiracy charges that Flynt now faces. Although Flynt is the first known publisher to be prosecuted under the statute, the law could have

ramifications far beyond the obscenity case. Could, for instance, five persons "conspiring" to cross a street against a red light be liable to prosecution under it? Probably not, but past abuses of conspiracy laws offer little comfort to those who operate on the fringe of "respectability".

Also present in the Flynt case is the newly fashionable element of "forum shopping." Just as Al Goldstein was prosecuted in Wichita rather than New York (because *Screw* is read in Kansas, too), so Larry Flynt is being prosecuted in Cincinnati instead of Columbus, Ohio, where he lives and turns out *Hustler*.

No doubt Flynt would fare better in Columbus, which is generally more tolerant of *Hustler* than Cincinnati, a more conservative city located in southern Ohio on the fringe of the Bible Belt.

Despite a retrial in the Goldstein case, the "forces of decency" appear to have the porn peddlers on the run. Whatever the outcome of the Goldstein and Flynt cases, it appears that prosecutors pushing for obscenity convictions are resorting to increasingly harsh and narrow interpretations of the law to achieve their ends. Federal prosecutor Larry Parrish of Memphis, Tennessee, who successfully prosecuted Herb Streicher a.k.a. Harry Reems of *Deep Throat* for conspiring to distribute pornographic material through means of interstate commerce, feels the pendulum is slowly swinging against

the porn peddlers. He claims that the Supreme Court has given prosecutors better reason to believe that lower court convictions will be upheld in appellate courts. Parrish even foresees a day when, due to a growing tide of public revulsion against smut, opponents of pornography will have even greater success than they are currently enjoying in their war against pornographers.

The fact that prosecutors such as Simon Leis in the Flynt case and Larry Schauf of the Goldstein trial have resorted to such questionable legal tactics as the use of odious conspiracy laws and "forum shopping" indicated that they consider their current offense to be something of a life and death struggle.

Goldstein's conviction, if not reversed in a recently granted new trial, will establish an unnerving precedent. Publications produced and circulated largely in urban centers will have to gain the approval of rural, conservative juries before they can be distributed nationally.

The indictment of Larry Flynt is equally disturbing. The application of so onerous a law to the publication of a magazine, whatever its orientations, is clearly a form of legal blackmail. And a seven-to 25-year prison term and a \$10,000 fine is too harsh a sentence to be applied to someone convicted of the highly subjective crime of conspiring to publish pornographic material.

Admittedly, Goldstein and Flynt are the sort of publishers who put journalists and defenders of the First Amendment in a quandry: they are frequently defended in spite of their editorial product, not because of it. Perhaps many defenders of a free press feel uncomfortable sharing the platform with two pornographers. Whatever the case, both men have been dealt with unfairly. Worse yet, assuming that freedom of the press is an absolute right, the symbolic implications of their manhandling by the judicial process offer little comfort to guardians of the First Amendment. Of course, neither of them should go to prison. But more important, neither of them should have been prosecuted in the first place. ■

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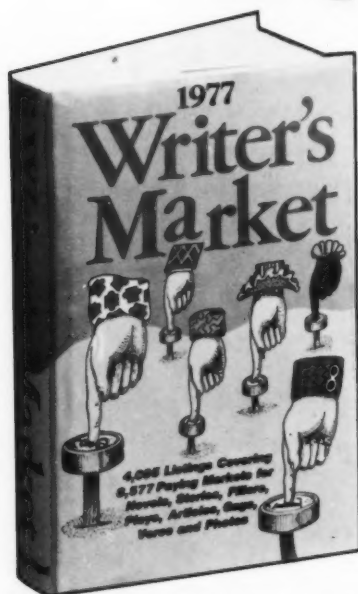
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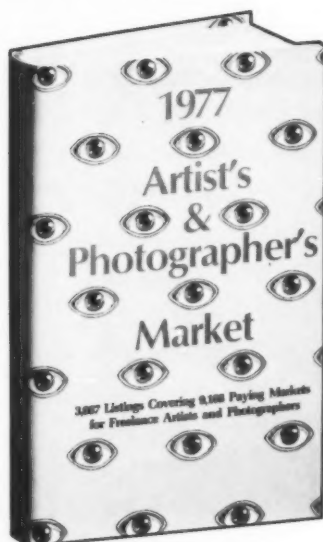
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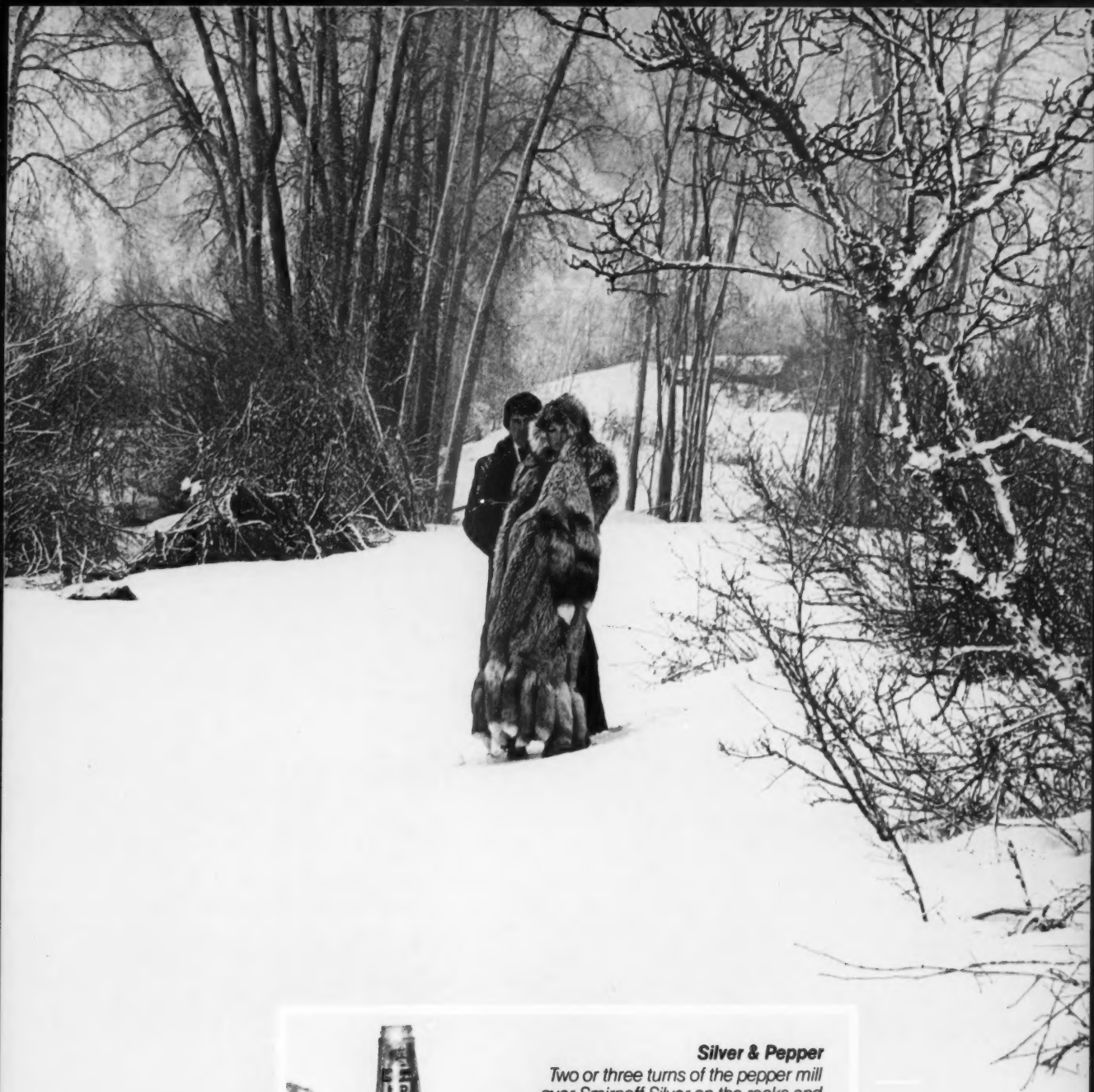
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